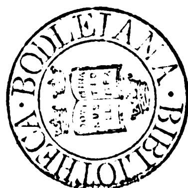
Hindu thought: a short account of the religious books of ...

William Arthur Leonard

HINDU THOUGHT:

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS OF INDIA, WITH SOME REMARKS CONCERNING THEIR ORIGIN, CHARACTER, AND INFLUENCE.

AND OTHER ESSAYS.



BY

WILLIAM A. LEONARD,

MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

"There is nothing more interesting than religion in the whole history of man."—Max Müller.

"A declaration of truth is more excellent than silence."—Manu.

"The great art of book-writing is to tell the reader just enough to make him wish for more."—Theological Review, Jan., 1875.

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NOTE.

As the principle which the National Indian Association has adopted is the Government one of non-interference with the Social or Religious Customs of the people of India, it may be as well to state here that of course the opinions expressed in the following pages are (so far as the Association is concerned) entirely my own.

W. A. L.

To the

House of Commons,

in the sincere hope that a

Better Knowledge of the Literature and Philosophy

of India

will lead to a Wiser Legislation

and Juster Appreciation of Her Worth,

the Essay on Hindu Thought

is inscribed

by The Author.



PREFACE.

A MEMBER of the Committee of the National Indian Association, I have been led into frequent intercourse with those Indians who have visited England for the purpose of study. Intercourse with these gentlemen naturally suggested a wish to know something of their ancient Religion, while extracts from their Religious Books occasionally to be met with in magazine articles and elsewhere served to increase that desire. I soon discovered how true were the words of the Hindu convert to Christianity, Joguth Chandra Gangooly—"What a splendid religion the Hindu religion must have "been!"

Of the Aryan stock ourselves, the Literature of India should have an immense interest for us. In the Hymns of the Vedas we can trace the rise of mythology; while in the philosophical portion of the Vedas (the Upanishads, &c.), and in the writings of Buddha, are high thoughts of God and exalted ideas of morality.

To clear away the misunderstandings and misconceptions which have for so long obscured the fair light of Indian Theology—a theology which will not suffer by comparison with Semitic Theology—is my chief object in publishing this treatise on Hindu Thought. If my endeavour should lead my countrymen to take an interest in the religious hopes and fears of the inhabitants of that great Empire, placed—as it would seem, looking back to the past and on to the future

—under our guidance by Providence, then I shall be well satisfied.

Narrow views of the Divine government of the world are fast giving way to a broad belief that God has indeed been in History; that India, as well as Judæa, has had her line of Prophets, and, alas! of Priests also; that God has not left himself without a witness in any corner of the earth; and that in His kingdom are all those who work righteousness, whether they have heard of Jesus or not.

Max Müller, in his Lectures on the Science of Religion (Longmans, 1873), puts in an earnest and noble plea for a generous recognition of the essentially religious character of the primitive Hindu faith. For the inquirer no better books can be found than the volume alluded to, together with the other works of this great scholar. I need hardly say how much indebted the paper on Hindu Thought is to Mr. Müller's researches.

The "Other Essays" are collected papers which I at various times contributed to the periodical literature of the day, and which are here revised and enlarged. I reprint them in the hope that they may stir up thought; for a man's opinions are nothing worth unless they are his *own*. But how few of us can say, "Our opinions are our own, for we have thought them out for ourselves!" Opinions, especially religious opinions, are too often inherited like wealth, and it cannot be too frequently insisted that such opinions are no opinions at all. When men learn to think for themselves, then will the advent of the Church of the Future be at hand.

W. A. L.

BRISTOL, 1875.



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HINDU THOUGHT.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTION.

NATIONS have ever been too ready to regard with contempt civilizations other than their own. To the Jews there were but two classes of men—themselves and the Gentiles: the Greeks considered surrounding nations to be barbarians: and if the Romans—mindful of their avowed wild origin, and conscious that their civilization lacked the fine touches of their more æsthetic vassals—could not, in like manner, regard the northern nations who over-ran them as quite outside the pale of civilised life; yet we have in the term *Vandalism* a sufficient indication of the feeling which has existed respecting those invaders. Nor is the Saxon civilization free from this self-complacent egotism: we are too prone to consider *ourselves* as the favoured of heaven, and to regard as our Canaan those distant lands whose inhabitants differ in religion and modes of life from the types considered so perfect at home. Is it not notorious that, save among an enlightened few, the people of foreign lands are still spoken of as heathen?

Milton, in his Areopagitica, describes Truth as having been cut into many pieces, far back in the distant ages, and in that noble speech he claims for man perfect freedom of

search, in order that once more her beautiful form may delight the nations. But surely Truth—pure, absolute Truth—has not been discovered yet; and if not, why do we so persistently (if not in so many words, at least by implication) affirm its present possession by ourselves? Whenever, and by whomsoever, the way to a knowledge of the literature and customs of contemporary, or even defunct, nations, is barred, *then*, I say, the possibility of any portion of truth being found in such literature and customs is virtually denied.

There are many things, indeed, "by law established," in our Western civilization which afford excellent ground for the heathen to turn the tables upon us, and enquire where our boasted progress is, and wherein we are better, or even so good, as they! The extreme laws for the protection of property, the severe penalties for theft, and on the other hand the comparatively slight punishments for assault or seduction, do no honour to our moral code.

Sir John Lubbock relates how a Jesuite missionary found the South Sea Islanders ignorant of the existence of a God, (1) and doubtless the story has been made the most of on missionary platforms; but while lamenting that any nation should be so wrapped up in the present as to have no thought of the future, let us not accept hastily the implied conclusion that all *our* countrymen believe in a God. If the ignorance of the poor South Sea Islander be a dark fact, what a still darker fact it must be, that thousands of men, women, and children here in the centres of European civilization, grow up and pass through life without apparently ever dreaming of a Superior Being, or of a Future Life.

If, then, our civilization is not without its blots, we must perforce acknowledge its imperfection; and we shall the more readily examine the ancient literature of other nations in proportion to the strength of our conviction, that the sole

(1) Such statements as these must, however, be received with caution.

possession of absolute truth is not at present confined to any one nation—not even to ourselves!

The Hindu race has perhaps the first claim on the attention of the student, and for these important reasons: India has given its religion to half the population of the globe (2), and it possesses the most ancient literature of any nation (3); a literature, moreover, which is invaluable to the student of Mythology, Philology, or Religion, abounding, as it does, with words and phrases which must have been handed down from pre-historic times, almost unveiling to us the simple minds of primitive man.

The early home of the human race was, it is generally admitted, in Central Asia, and Hindustan was doubtless an early settlement, as families migrated from the ancestral ground. For how long the originators of our race remained together before spreading themselves over the globe, it is now quite impossible to say. Comparative Mythology has made it certain that a long time must have elapsed (4), for while each nation has myths and folk lore of its own, the stories when analysed, and the names of the heroes when examined, almost invariably point to a common origin.

The study of Language leads to a similar conclusion. Indeed, it is difficult to accept any other theory of the population of the globe than the one which places the *original common* home of man in Central Asia.

In Hindustan these early settlers found a comfortable

(2) According to Berghaus, 31.2 are Buddhists, and 13.4 are Brahminists.

(3) It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that Biblical criticism has decided the book of Judges to be the oldest book in the Bible, and this could not have been written *before* the thirteenth century B.C.

(4) If we accept the Biblical Chronology we must dispute its Anthropology, for there are representations (dating 2000 years B.C.) of Egyptian kings employing *negro* soldiers, and no one has been rash enough to affirm that a thousand, or even two thousand, years would have been sufficient for peopling the world with *two* distinct races emanating from a single pair!

home. The soil is exceedingly fertile, and would thus offer inducements to a people who knew little of agriculture, and who lacked the implements without which it is impossible in colder climates to procure from the land an adequate return. Here, under a tropical sun, the settlers must have multiplied exceedingly. Away from the world, as it were, the centuries must have seen them spreading over their peninsula, with few daily cares, and comparatively free from invasion.

The exact age of the Indian nation cannot now be ascertained; its sacred language (the Sanskrit), and the internal evidence of its sacred literature (which are India's and the world's oldest books), point to a very high antiquity. Owing to its remoteness, however, from the centres of ancient civilization (Greece and Rome), India seems to have been lost to the world for ages, and with the exception of the dates of one or two invasions, its history before the year 1000 of our era is almost a blank. From its literature we are enabled in some slight measure to form an idea of its inhabitants and their customs; but India lacks, and ever will lack, such a history as historians have been enabled to write of Rome and Greece.

Nevertheless, when we remember that till the year 1818, when James Mill wrote his History of India, but little or nothing was known of that mighty empire, we have reason to congratulate ourselves that we now know so much.

A few facts concerning India may help us the better to understand its literature. India was not so entirely cut off from the knowledge of distant nations but that ideas of its wealth had suggested to ambitious rulers the conquest of its inhabitants. Five hundred and twelve years before our era, Darius Hystaspes led his hosts into India, and 185 years later (327 B.C.) Alexander the Insatiable attempted its subjugation. But India was far away from the western nations, and her servitude could not have been for long; hence it is

probable that for long years after Alexander's visit the country enjoyed comparative quiet and peace. The density of the population, and the enormous wealth of many of the leading families prevent any other conclusion. As commerce increased, and the intercourse between nations became more and more a necessity, rumours of the wealth of India, and of its fertile soil, once more excited the cupidity of the West, and about 1004 A.D. the Mahommedans invaded the Peninsula.

The Afghans soon after established their empire in India. The history of their princes reads more like a romance than a narrative of real facts. Genghis Khan is *said* to have killed fourteen millions of people under the pretence of establishing the worship of one god (about 1222 A.D.)

The Mogul rule followed—its establishment causing much bloodshed. Aurungzebe (1658 to 1707) had an immense empire. He is spoken of as having brought "all India under one umbrella." His annual revenue is considered to have amounted to thirty-two millions sterling!

In 1739 the Persians, under Nadir Shah (or Kouli Khan), invaded India, and carried away treasure to the value of a hundred and twenty-five millions sterling. The Mogul empire broke up soon after, and distinct and independent sovereignties were set up by numerous petty princes. With each of these the English have had to treat separately; for more than a hundred years (1750-1863) war was raging between the British forces and one or other of these minor potentates.

The passage to India was discovered by Vasco di Gama in 1497, and the first European settlement was founded by him five years later, at Cochin, on the south coast. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, English traders, stimulated by the ventures of the Portuguese, sent an expedition into India; and in December, 1600, the first charter was granted

to the East India Company. For 213 years this company had the exclusive right to trade with India (5). In 1813 the trade was thrown open, the Company, however, still governing the country, aided by a Board of Control (established May 10, 1784, and remodelled in 1793).

The mutiny of 1857 showed the Company's incapacity to deal with such an outbreak, and, indeed, its general inability to deal with the concerns of so large an empire. The government of India was therefore transferred to the British Crown, August 2, 1858. The Board of Control was abolished, and a Council of State for India was instituted instead. On November 1st of that year Her Majesty was proclaimed in the principal towns of India, as Queen of Great Britain and the Colonies, &c., the Governor-General of India being at the same time proclaimed Viceroy.

The Overland Route to India was opened in 1838, thus considerably shortening the distance between the two countries. So far as news is concerned the telegraph has, of course, shortened it still further.

Hindustan has an area of 1,309,200 square miles, and a population of about two hundred millions.

(5) The English sovereignty in India was decided by the battle of Plassey, 1757. See an interesting article in the British Quarterly Review for July, 1875.

CHAPTER II.—IDOLATRY?

THE Hindus are generally regarded as idolaters; and did the belief rest here but little harm would be the result. Unfortunately, the common opinion is that their religious books teach them to be so. The great Hindu reformer, Ram Mohun Roy, proved conclusively, in a series of tracts published some fifty years ago, that this is not the case. That many of the Hindus *are* idolaters is a fact not to be disputed; but that they are so in direct opposition to the doctrines laid down by the writers of the Vedas is another fact.

The Vedas, it is true, tolerate the worship of the sun, and the various forces of nature, but only as a last resort for those uneducated persons who are unable to conceive of an Invisible God, and who, were they forbidden to expend their natural religious energies in this way, would not only be destitute of all religious principle, but being without religious restraint, might indulge in all kinds of wickedness. The Upanishads of the Vedas are particularly careful to assign this as the sole reason for their toleration of idolatry, and over and over again insist that idol-worship must be considered only as a means to an end; that it must be given up, and a purer and less materialistic religion adopted; for "eternal beatitude" is not to be obtained save but by the knowledge of the Supreme Being (6).

Idolatry, moreover, does not consist solely in the worship of natural phenomena or graven images; it is the transference of that homage and reverence due to the Creator to

(6) See the Moonduk Upanishad of the At'harva Ved; the Céna Upanishad of the Sáma Ved; the Ish Upanishad of the Yaga Ved. Most of the quotations from the Upanishads are given as translated by the Rajah Ram Mohun Roy.

some minor object or objects. Is there really any difference between the worshipping of idols of wood and stone, and the bowing down to those less *apparent*, but none the less *real*, gods—mammon and vice? While we should, naturally I suppose, resent being called a nation of idolaters, it seems quite in propriety so to style foreign peoples, whose "idolatry" after all is only less abstract than our own, and perhaps to a well-regulated mind, not quite so repulsive! With us the absorbing pursuit of wealth and pleasure deprave the mind, and prevent the free exercise of those generous sympathies which by their occasional appearance prove themselves to be a portion of our humanity.

With the "idolatrous" Hindu, however, the case is different; though, as Mr. Mittra writes, "few rules, if any, are purely civil or social; everything is religion, and religion is in everything" (7), yet the *nature* of even this poor religion is not so soul-destroying as the other, because it does not bind the intellect and heart to the eminently *selfish* objects which here in the west seem to be the aim of existence.

If, as Mr. Carlyle tersely puts it, Idolatry is only more Idolatrous, to which of the nations of the earth shall we award the palm?

Nor does the theological system of India compare unfavourably with the theological systems of Europe. If in the case of Hindus the primitive simplicity of their gospel has been abandoned, so also has this been the case with the Christians. No sooner did it appear that the fears and hopes of the multitude might be made subservient to the promotion and aggrandisement of one particular class, than this class—the Brahmans in India and the priests in Christendom—at once set to work to keep all others in ignorance. The reading of the Vedas, as well as the reading of the Bible,

(7) Journal of the National Indian Association for 1871, p. 127.

was strictly prohibited to the laity; vexatious rites and ceremonies were imposed, and their due observance insisted upon under threats of future transmigration or final damnation; such rites and ceremonies, moreover, being quite unacceptable to the Deity unless performed by a priest. Is it to be wondered that alike in India and in Europe such giant superstitions should have grown up and flourished, keeping the "people" in gross moral darkness, and its natural accompaniment, sin?

In Europe, the younger civilization, natural causes led, in the sixteenth century, to the Reformation. In India those natural causes were wanting, or at least not strong enough for a complete revolution. Contact with the thought of other nations is now, however, doing what Papal abuses did here. It was too late in the world's history for the Christian laity to be trodden so completely under foot as were the people of Hindustan.

The system of caste, which finds no support in the Vedas (8), was one great engine by which the Brahmans ensured the moral slavery of the Hindus. The laws of Manu lay down most minute distinctions of caste, and it is in these that the Brahmans find the support which the Vedas do not afford. These laws were evidently written by the priestly class, and as they are allowed to be read by the laity, no hope exists of the Hindus throwing off these arbitrary distinctions unless particular and constant reference is made to the absence of all such regulations in the Vedas—to which even the Brahmans admit the Institutes of Manu are only secondary.

When caste was instituted the Brahmans were placed at the top of the list as the spiritual guides of the people.

(8) There is but *one* text in the Vedas where caste is mentioned, and Max Müller considers this text as an interpolation.

There were three other castes, and all four classes were subdivided into minor ones.

The rules were very stringent;—no class was permitted to marry into another; a high-class Brahman considered himself polluted if the shadow of one of the lowest caste fell upon him, while even the low-class Sudra threw away his working utensils if a Brahman stepped into his boat (9).

No occupation of daily life was free from vexatious and injurious interference; each individual was compelled to follow the calling of the particular class into which he was born, whether he had an inclination or not for that calling. The son of a Brahman must be a Brahman, or priest, whatever his character might be; and the son of a painter must be a painter even if he had not the slightest interest in art!

Max Müller thinks these arrangements were fraught with benefit to the classes concerned, saying, that where a general system of education was wanting, a child's best instructor was his parent, and that parent could best instruct his child in his own calling. This, I think, is a mistake; for the development of the human mind is best left unfettered; things will right themselves if left alone; nature herself is the best physician. It cannot be disputed that in the matter in question one custom re-acted on the other, and where it was regarded as quite sufficient for a parent to educate his offspring, no need was felt for a more general system of education.

But even in our own civilization, if social distinctions are not observed with such minute detail, yet we cannot hold ourselves altogether blameless. It is true there is growing up a strong conviction that nobleness of nature is better than

(9) See Max. Müller's interesting Chapter on Caste, in volume ii. of "Chips from a German Workshop."

nobleness of birth; that wealth of learning surpasses, in the the happiness it affords, wealth of money; and that the possession of rare virtue is far superior to the possession of the rarest gem. But this conviction is at present confined to a few liberal thinkers. Among the many, rank, influence, and wealth, on the one hand, and plebeian birth, obscurity, and poverty on the other, are the grand distinctions: men are to be regarded as despised according as they possess the one or the other.

The Ancient Books of the Hindus, to which more or less of authority belongs, are the following. They are enumerated in the order of their worth:—

THE VEDAS.

THE LAWS (or Institutes) OF MANU.

SIX SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE PURANAS (or Legendary History of India).

THE TANTRAS (or Ceremonial Discourses).

Of these some, notably the Puranas, are of modern date. The Vedas are the oldest of the books, but their date is very uncertain. They do not date certainly later than 1500 years B.C., while it is probable that the Rig Veda (the most ancient of them all goes back centuries earlier than this, for reasons to be stated hereafter.

There are four Vedas:—The Rig (or Rich); the Ujur, sometimes spelt Yagur; the Sáma; and the At'harva Ved.

Veda (Greek, *oida)* signifies knowledge; and this term is frequently applied by the Hindus to *all* their sacred literature. Rig, or Rich, means to praise, or to celebrate; and the Rig-Veda contains a collection of hymns in honour of different divinities, most of them, however, being addressed to Agni and Indra. This collection is called the Rig-Veda Sanhita, and is entirely in poetry; there are ten

books, and the number of the hymns is about 1028 (10). Besides the Sanhita the Rig-Veda comprises some prose writings—the Brahmans and Sutras—giving information as to the proper use of the hymns, &c. These, however, are later additions, composed when the real meaning of the ancient hymns was lost, or obscured by changes in language, &c.

The Ujur Veda seems to have been designed as a Ritual. It contains a few prayers; but they are brief, and in prose.

The Sáma Veda (see remark on this Veda in the Appendix) is described by Professor Wilson as little better than a re-cast of the Rig-Veda, while the At'harva Veda is a later supplement to the same Veda.

Besides the hymns and prayers to various deities (which are always the *oldest* portions of the Vedas), there are treatises on Astronomy, Medicine, Arms, Grammar, and various Arts and Sciences. There are also some valuable philosophical and theological writings called Upanishads.

It would appear that soon after the division into castes took place in India the class whose business it was to defend and rule the country caused a revolt by its despotic government. A fresh division took place, and the legislative portion was separated from the executive. The native writer from whom I quote says that centuries of peace followed, during which the Brahmans devoted themselves to scientific and philosophical pursuits (in other words to writing the additional matter for the Vedas) and religious austerities. "The sages "of India made religion, logic, moral philosophy, and psycho-"logy their special studies; their enquiries are characterised "by the most subtle and acute logic; their physical wants "were supplied by the fertile soil, and their leisure (of which

(10) This number is given by Max Müller. Professor Wilson, who published a translation of the Rig-Veda Sanhita in 1850, says there are 1000 Súktas, or 10,000 stanzas.

"they had plenty, from the absence of outward pressure) "was bestowed upon abstruse spiritual questions; but man's "material welfare and the augmentation of his earthly power "were hardly considered" (11). To these Upanishads we shall return presently.

The consideration of the hymns of the Rig-Veda lead us to speculations concerning the origin of man, and his then mental and moral condition. If we accept the theory of evolution, we shall at once see a harmonious whole. The Rig-Veda Sanhita will then be regarded as the earliest authentic record of our race, revealing to us the modes in which the mysteries of nature unfolded themselves to the wondering eyes of primitive man. In the various hymns we shall find numerous threads of philosophy, which, while running parallel with the stream of legend and poetry (12), each satisfying a different want of the human soul, found no resting-place until time and opportunity presented themselves to the sages for the embodying their products of thought in the Upanishads. In these treatises the Supreme Being is spoken of as One:—"Space his ears, the Vedas his speech, the "world his intellect, the earth his feet, while he is the soul "of the whole universe" (13). "God is eternal amidst the "perishable universe; he is but one; he is superior to "nature" (14).

Accustomed as we are to regard the Israelites as the only nation of antiquity to whom a divine revelation was made, these extracts from the sacred books of the Hindu nation must appear very startling. In the early (15) books of a

(11) A convincing proof that *all* sciences are related, and that where a philosopher is shut out from the world, that world itself must be a loser!

(12) See Max Müller in Contemporary Review, December, 1871.

(13) Moonduk Upanishad.

(14) Kut'h Upanishad (Ujur Veda).

(15) 1280 B.C., when, according to Sir William Jones, the Laws of Manu were written; but no dates can be fixed with certainty.

nation now given to idolatry, do we find high and pure monotheistic conceptions of the God of heaven and earth!

If upon the other hand we accept the Mosaic narrative of the creation of man, and the popular belief that man was at his creation endowed with an insight into divine things, we have to account for the falling away from the original knowledge, and the adoption of nature-worship in its place, and then for the re-assumption afterwards of the primitive revelation.

But we have, in language itself, a conclusive proof that the first speech of man was exceedingly simple—a few roots sufficing, with various affixes, to make his wants and unsophisticated thoughts known to his fellows. Language has grown, and thought has grown, and it is only reasonable to conclude that man's conceptions of the Infinite that surrounds him have grown likewise.

Let us once rid ourselves of an implicit faith in the necessary truth of the associations with which education, and a blind reliance on the verbal inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, have invested the first appearance of man upon the earth, and we shall at once see the force of the argument. But if we believe that man was created with all his bodily powers in a state of perfection, we must admit that Dr. Döllinger has a show of reason on his side when he states his conviction that "man in his primeval innocence was "enabled to conceive of the deity as a pure, spiritual, super- "natural, and infinite Being, distinct from the world and "exalted above it; that man lost this conception, and the "yearning for something in its place led to the deification of "external nature, the worship of the elements coming first."

Mr. Cox (author of "The Aryan Mythology") thinks the Being who placed man in the world would not have left him wholly to himself, though he admits this does not determine the *amount* of knowledge imparted to him.

It is strange these two writers (though they differ from each other) should not have seen the fatal objection to their theory which lies in the fact, that if the Creator thought it necessary and kind to reveal himself in some measure, however slight, to the first family, it was just as necessary, and would have been much kinder, to give his creatures such a sufficient revelation, or such strong spiritual natures, as to render backsliding, especially so great and lamentable a backsliding, impossible!



Chapter III.—Nature-Worship and the Origin of Mythology.

Let us examine some of these hymns from the Rig-Veda Sanhita—hymns addressed for the most part to Agni and Indra (the deities of fire and the firmament, or the sun), a few being in praise of the Maruts, or Winds; the Aswins, or Sons of the Sun; Ushas, the personified Dawn; &c.

"I declare the valorous deeds of Indra, which the thun-"derer has achieved. He clove the cloud; he cast the "waters down (to the earth); he broke (a way) for the "torrents of the mountains. He clove the cloud; seek-"ing refuge in the mountain; . . . the flowing waters "quickly hastened to the ocean, like cows to their calves."

"Ushas nourishing (all), comes daily like a matron, the "directress (of household duties) conducting all transient "creatures to decay; at her coming each biped stirs, she "wakes up the birds. She animates the diligent, and sends "clients (to their patrons). This auspicious Ushas has har-"nessed her (vehicles) from afar, above the rising of the sun; "and she comes gloriously upon man with a hundred "chariots."

Agni is said to be "within the waters, within woods, and "within all moveable and immoveable things; immortal, "and performing pious acts, like a benevolent (prince) "among his people."

"The spacious chariot of the graceful (Dawn) has been "harnessed; the immortal gods have ascended it, the noble "and all-pervading Ushas has risen up from the darkness,

"bringing health to human habitations. She, the daughter "of heaven, is beheld in the East—gracious, and arrayed "in light; she travels steadily along the path of the Sun, as "if cognisant of its pleasure" (16).

"The Dawn comes near to him; she expires as soon as "he begins to breathe—the mighty one irradiates the sky."

The Dawn is looked upon as a particular friend of man. It "does not despise the small or the great"; it "brings "wealth," and is "always the same, immortal, divine—does "not grow old."

"Shining forth, he rises from the lap of the Dawn, praised "by singers; he, my God Savitar (the Sun), stepped forth; "he never misses the same place." "How long is it that "the Dawns have risen? How long will they rise? To us "she (Ushas) is now visible, and they approach who will "behold her in after times."

Are we not reminded of the equally beautiful descriptions of the sun "coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong "man to run his race"; of the heavenly bodies whose "line "is gone out into all the earth, who have neither speech nor "language, whose voice is not heard"; of the "moon that "walketh in brightness," &c., to be found in our Bible? The same cause which operated in the case of the writers of the Vedas operated also in the case of the writers of the Psalms and the Book of Job. It may safely be affirmed that *before* mankind separated the then undivided community had a common stock of phrases embodying its wondering and childlike admiration of natural phenomena—phrases which, after the dispersion, became modified and even recast by new aspects of nature and new circumstances of life. Max Müller has shown this must have been the case

(16) These three extracts are from Professor Wilson's Translation of the "Rig-Veda Sanhita, 1850." The next two are from Max Müller's "Chips, etc." While for the last two I am indebted to Mr. Cox's "Aryan Mythology."

(17) in a very convincing manner. He says—Before the nations separated, there existed a root Svar or Sval, signifying to warm or to glitter; words compounded from this root are to be met with in the old languages. A Sanskrit word (18) for the sun—Savitar—we have just met with; then there is the Greek word *selas*, or splendour, and *sĕlēna*, the moon; in Latin we have *sol*, the sun; and so on.

The sun must have been an object of awe to primeval men. They saw him rise in the East, and spoke of him as being born of the night; or as having overcome the powers of darkness; he ushered in the Dawn, who then fled from his approach—his beloved though she was; even the light summer clouds, cows, as they were figuratively called, were chased away, and he, the Brilliant, the Awakener, the Destroyer, the Warmer, the Ruler, entered upon his course. As one great source of heat the Sun was the Life-giver, the Life-Preserver; and if Fire was so necessary to them (for cooking purposes, &c.,) as to merit numberless hymns in its honour, so too was the Bright Sun, without whose cheering rays it was well known vegetable life would soon die out. Hence the hymns to Indra about equal in number the hymns to Agni. As all life seemed to be called into fresh existence day by day, it was natural that the Sun, whose rising was the signal for the day's duties to commence, should be credited with a life-imparting agency. All Life appeared to depend for its life upon heat; death was cold; it was impossible to sustain life without some degree of warmth, and so every living thing was believed to contain some warmth (an

(17) Max Müller, however, hesitates to trace man back to *one* stock; he speaks of three races—the Aryan, Semitic, and Turanian; but these three evidently had a common, if now untraceable, origin.

(18) The Sun seems to have had as many names as it has characteristics; to the duplex meanings most of the old roots are to be traced chiefly the immense number and extraordinary character of the myths respecting the sun, etc.

early presentation of the doctrine of Latent Heat?), and this principle, or power, of nature was personified under the title of Agni.

But to return to the Sun. Toward evening, after having toiled hard all day for men, not for himself (19), he meets once more, in the twilight, with his beloved Ushas (now the Gloaming). A little later and a terrible struggle takes place ; he has to fight with the serpents of the night, and in the midst of the conflict he, the friend of mankind, is lost to sight. During the hours of darkness he is supposed to be wrestling for the mastery, and this he eventually obtains, rising glorious on the following morn.

A recent writer (20) has described Poetry as imagination set to the music of metre. If to European culture we must look for reason and close argument, it is to Asia we must turn for some of the noblest flights of the imagination. It is when reading these old-fashioned songs that the full force of Macaulay's statement is felt. Writing of Milton the historian says, the marvel lies not in the author of "Paradise Lost," writing so sublimely as he did in the *early* days of modern civilization, but because it was so *late* in our country's history! The *early* days of a people are those in which Poetry of the highest order is most likely to be written. "Nations," writes Macaulay, "like individuals, first perceive, "and then abstract—they advance from particular images to "general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened "society is philosophical; that of a half-civilized people is "poetical" (21). Max Müller describes the hymns of the Rig-Veda as "brightest-dew of nature's own poetry," while

(19) In Sanskrit all names are either masculine or feminine. When the Sun was named the noun *chanced* to have a masculine termination, so it is always "he" in these hymns.

(20) Rev. Paxton Hood.

(21) Macaulay's Essay on Milton,—page 3 of Longman's reprint, 1869.

Professor Wilson says, "the variety and richness of the "metre of the Ṛig-Veda hymns evince an extraordinary "cultivation of rhythmical contrivance"; in other words, bearing out Macaulay's argument. The *early* language of a people lends itself most readily to the requirements of the poet.

If we accept the development theory of man's nature, we of course see that natural phenomena would be the *first* objects to attract his attention, so that it would be perfectly natural for him to see in the forces of nature some mysterious powers or agencies at work, the essence of which he could not then divine, but which he knew were external to himself, calling up in his breast feelings of insecurity and dependence on the one hand, and of hope and joy on the other (22). What more interesting study can there be than that of tracing the growth of the religious sentiment in our race?

With the exception that "his natural cause" was unknown in those primitive times, the lines of Shakspere afford a truthful picture of the mode in which natural phenomena were treated :—

> "No natural exhalation in the sky,
> No 'scape of nature, no distemper'd day,
> No common wind, nor customèd event,
> But they will pluck away his natural cause,
> And call them motions, prodigies, and signs,
> Abortions, presages, and tongues of heaven."

Let it not be supposed, however, that in this worship of the Fire, the Sun, and various other deities, any very absurd rites and ceremonies were observed. On the contrary, the worship seems to have been as simple as it well

(22) This view is opposed to tnat held by Mr. Cox, wno believes Mythology did not spring from any religious conviction—thatna ture-worship was not indulged in when the myths were first originated, only taking place when the primary meanings of the myths were forgotten. Max Müller, however, has this sentence in vol ii. (pp. 100 and 101) of "Chips," etc., "Sunrise inspired the first prayers," and I believe he is right.

could be. Hardly anywhere do we find more than the presentation, by Fire, of clarified butter and the juice of the Soma plant prescribed. The form of worship was strictly patriarchal and domestic; for though mention is made of priests, yet it was not absolutely necessary that the offering should be made by their agency. Still there *is* the thin end of the priestly wedge, and it was driven home with a vengeance in after years, as we shall presently see!

The deities were always invoked at sunrise. One hymn to Ushas ran thus:—"Mother of the gods, rival of Aditi, "illuminator of the sacrifice, mighty Ushas, shine forth; "approving of our prayer, dawn upon us." Ushas is here alluded to as mother of the gods and *rival to Aditi*. The explanation of this apparent contradiction will also serve to make clear how it was that in Mythology, especially in the later (Egyptian, Greek, &c.) Mythologies, the characteristics and exploits of various deities seem to change about; and how one god is sometimes the husband, and sometimes the son of the same goddess.

When the parentage of the gods was first arranged, Aditi, the Earth, was said to be their mother. Afterwards, as the imagination of the early poets grew by what it fed on (as it was in its nature to do), the Dawn, which called man to his religious duties, was also spoken of as indirectly awaking the gods by the worship then offered. But it is a mother's pleasure to awake her children; hence the Dawn was figuratively regarded as the mother of the deities. Again, inasmuch as the Dawn ushered in the morning; brought to light the passing clouds; gave birth, as it were, to the Sun; she was in this sense, too, the parent of a god, of whom, in another sense, she was the Beloved—the Bride!

Another old root was *krn*, signifying "to put forth." The splendid sun "put forth" rays of light, hence he was called *kronos;* the Bull "put forth" horns, and he was noted for

his great strength. Soon both the Sun and the Bull were called Horned-Ones. The same word (Shur or Tur) being used both for Bull and Prince, the Horned Man-bull, so frequently to be seen on sculptures from Nineveh, came to be employed as a symbol of a mighty ruler or prince.

A passage in Tertullian tells us that Saturn was "the first before all others to wear a crown," so that our word crown (23) is evidently derived from the old root which represented the idea of the sun putting forth rays of light, and the bull its horns.

Saturn was another name given to the Sun by the primitive observers of nature. The sun was hidden from their gaze after he had sunk in the west, so they called him Satur, or Stur, the hidden one. Thus objects came to have different names for each one of their peculiarities!

It must not, however, be taken for granted that the *whole* of the Ancient Mythology had its origin in the observance of Natural Phenomena. It is highly probable that later generations, to whom had descended traditions of the exploits of their ancestors, came to regard these same ancestors as elevated from the common run of mankind—as, in fact, heroes; not at first exactly divine, and yet somewhat superior to themselves (24).

We know how in later days—and days not very remote from the present!—wonderful stories have gathered round noted individuals.

Was Rome—warlike, imperial Rome—founded by an ordinary man in an ordinary manner? No; so common an origin the seven-hilled city could not have had. Two brothers left exposed, and owing their very lives'-blood to the tender mercies of a wolf, laid the foundations of the

(23) Primitive crowns usually had horns.
(24) What is the meaning of "sons of God" in Genesis vi. 2?

Eternal Empire that one day was to give laws to the whole world!

And so it has ever been; and most of all, we may be sure, was it so in the morning of the world, when man wanted experience to guide him, and science to teach him.

We cannot doubt but that in these essentially Solar myths are incorporated legendary tales of the doings of the first men.



Chapter IV.—Origin of Religion.—The Upanishads.

Upon the other hand, while firmly believing that the development (of man's mental and moral powers, if not of his physical nature) theory is the most rational one to adopt, it does not necessarily follow that if we accept the other theory—viz., the creation of man by a special divine act, in full possession of those mental and moral qualities necessary for his guidance here, together with a revelation of divine mysteries,—it does not necessarily follow, I say, that these hymns are to be regarded as idolatrous. Rather *then* should we attribute them to a highly-wrought imagination, that, *were it not for the higher revelation*, would see in the glories of the Earth, Sun, and Sky fit objects of awe and reverence. Nay more, which *did* find in these same glories minor manifestations of the Great Spirit who ruled over all.

Again; did facts, in our opinion, warrant our believing that man was, in the very beginning of his history, endowed with a divinely-imparted knowledge of the Divine, we should argue from historical facts of later civilizations that, parallel with these seemingly pantheistic ideas, there was probably a stream of correct theology also running—a stream which, in this particular case, did not become stereotyped till after the Vedas had assumed a written form.

Take, for instance, the Greek civilization, in whose literature was to be found much wilder stories of the gods than any India ever afforded. Though both had a common *origin*, the details varied, as did the peoples in their circum-

stances and surroundings. We cannot assert that the Greeks had no other religious belief than the Iliad is supposed to teach. The tales related there of Priam and Achilles, and other heroes, were too gross and sensualistic to be the generally-received opinions of a people whose civilization was so refined concerning their gods.

Epicharmos, pupil of Pythagoras (B.C. 540), Empedokles, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, all regarded these stories as simply myths, and forestalled the philologists of to-day by taking them to be poetical and highly-imaginative narratives of the daily course of the sun through the heavens, &c.

Zenophanes did not hesitate to say there was but one God, and He was unlike mortals both in form and in thought. Nor can it be objected that these men were but few—that most, if not all, of their countrymen believed in the truth of those wretched (25) narratives, and acknowledged as their gods the characters described in the Iliad and in the popular Mythology. Some of the more uneducated may perhaps have believed in them, if indeed the uneducated may be said to *believe* in anything, save themselves! Manifestly, it is as unfair to credit the Greek nation with a faith in gods who devoured their own offspring, and who committed incest, because so few writings have come down to us condemnatory of such faith, as it would be to charge Englishmen with a want of faith in virtue because there are so few writers, *in comparison with the population*, who descant upon such themes. The fact of the writings which have come down to us being unanimously in favour of a rational religion should convince us that those who believed otherwise formed neither the bulk nor the influential portion of the nation.

I must admit that these coarse stories must to a cer-

(25) Wretched only when regarded as the *religious* beliefs of a nation.

tain extent have influenced the popular beliefs; and the possibility, or almost certainty, of ancestral exploits having been incorporated with *what were once* palpable solar myths, doubtless lent a sort of authority and sacredness to narratives whose original meanings were forgotten. But the mere fact of these meanings having been forgotten warrant me in thinking that, after all, the stories were but tradition to the bulk of the people, and myths to the uneducated portion who were unable to unravel them; and for this reason—had these improbable stories been the religion, say of the Greeks, would they not have been tended with so much zeal as to have made it *unsafe* for the philosophers to expose their absurdity? Here there were no, or but few, priests, and the state was without a settled theology; the greatest freedom was allowed to individual thinkers; and as there were no priestly interests at stake, and as political factions made no attempt to drag such matters into their disputes, ample opportunity was afforded for the gradual broadening of the conceptions of the Supreme, and for the cultivation of all manly virtues. It is simply impossible to believe that the revolting tales related of the heroes of Mythology were accepted in their integrity as actual deeds performed by the gods to whom worship and the highest reverence of the soul were to be paid!

And cannot we learn a lesson here? The philosophy of those pre-Christian times is now regarded very complacently by theologians whose present conceptions of the Deity either owe somewhat of their form, or else are in themselves somewhat similar, to those which resulted from the refining process carried on by such thinkers as Socrates, Plato, and others. Theologians, however, who now think perfection has been obtained, that knowledge of God can no further go here, and who therefore brand as infidels the philosophers

of the present day, who still keep up the refiner's fire, endeavouring to separate the pure metal from the dross!

How true was the complaint of the old Greek philosopher, Zenophanes (about B.C. 500), that men described their gods as possessing the same mind, and voice, and figure, as they themselves possessed. The Ethiopians and Thracians pictured their gods as respectively black with flat noses, and red-haired with blue eyes. He then adds, with keen irony, "Oxen and lions, could they but draw, would draw their "gods like oxen and lions!"

Max Müller says that before the Aryan family split up into the various sections which afterwards became the Greek, Latin, German, and Indian nations, a universal Deity had been conceived of, whom, for want of a better name, was called after the sky—the bright blue sky, so high above—Dyaus; to which was soon joined the endearing epithet of Father—Dyaus-Pitar, the Heaven-Father. From this term the various Aryan nations derived their name for the Supreme Being—the Greeks, Zeu Pater (of whom the poet Aratus said, "we are his offspring"); the Latins, Jupiter; &c.

This and other reasons compel us to regard the Vedic hymns as poetry. An old Persian proverb says, "there is more merit in understanding poetry than in composing it." Let us not find in the Hindu books nought but denials of belief in one true God, and a setting up of inanimate objects as deities to be worshipped, because in these lovely hymns the early poets of *our* race personified the solemn mysteries of Nature, which required the genius of a later age to unravel!

But years rolled on, and the Upanishads were written. In them we find most exalted notions of the Great Ruler of the Universe—notions so exalted as to render it highly improbable that the nature-worship of the Sanhitas could

have obtained for long, after man had once used his reasoning powers.

The Vedas begin with the word Om, and this of itself is sufficient to prove their high intrinsic worth. Om is the most sacred name of the Most High, and the reading of the Vedas is to be prefaced by pronouncing this name together with Bhooh Bhoovah Swah (Earth, Space, and Heaven—all of which were regarded as parts of the Supreme Being. See page 20), and the Gayutree. By doing this, and reflecting on their meaning the grace of God is enjoyed, and His worship most fitly performed (25).

The Gayutree is as follows :—

TŬT SUVITOOR VURENYUM,
BHURGO DEVUSYU DHEEMUHI,
DHIYO YO NUH PRUCHODUYAT."

" We meditate on that Supreme Spirit of the Splendid Sun, who directs our understandings ;" or as paraphrased by Sir William Jones—" Let us adore the supremacy of that " Divine Sun, the Godhead who illuminates all, who re-creates " all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, " whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in " our progress towards his holy seat ;" or again, as translated by Colebrook—" Let us meditate on the adorable light of " the Divine Creator ; may He rouse our minds."

The Upanishads tell us that the Supreme Being is perceptible only by intellect, that he is known to man as the origin of intellect, and those who think of Him as such are possessed of the real notion of God. " Only he whose " mind is purified by the light of true knowledge, through

(26) Ram Mohun Roy has pointed out the similarity in sound between OM and ON of Exodus III. 14 (Septuagint Version).—EGO EIMI ŌN. Is there any connection between this Hindu symbol of the Supreme Being and the Egyptian ON (the Sun)?

"incessant contemplation, perceives the most pure God. "The mind being perfectly freed from impurity, God, who "spreads over the mind and all the senses, imparts a know- "ledge of Himself to the heart." The Moonduk Upanishad, from which this is taken, has this also—"A pious votary of "God obtains whatever division of the world, and whatever "desirable object he may wish for himself or for another: "therefore anyone who is desirous of honour or advantage "should revere him. A knowledge of God is not acquir- "able from a study of the Vedas; it must be sought after. "No man is deficient in faith." The similarity between these sentiments and the teaching of the Bible generally is remarkable; and while to earnest students the result cannot but be the throwing aside of all the factitious authority with which the schools have invested the Old and New Testaments, it *reinvests* those books with a new and more healthy interest, as the genuine records of the aspirations of men of like passions as ourselves after the solemn Mysteries of the Universe! We need no theory of Inspiration to draw our attention to these Jewish philosophies; we feel such theories rob the narrative of its most attractive features.

If the pious Hindu votary was led to believe that worldly pleasures, with fame and honour, would follow his successful endeavours to know God, the Israelite, too, was reminded that of the righteous only could it be said his seed never wanted bread, and that long life and children were not the portion of the wicked. If in Hinduism those who desired honour and advantage were directed to revere the Most High, so in Judea were those who wished health and prosperity directed to trust in the Lord. Could a pious votary of Brahma obtain desirable things for another? so too should the faithful prayer of the elders restore the sick to health. Was the Hindu told that a knowledge of God must be *sought* after?

in like manner was the Jew to seek his God if haply he might find him, first of all believing that He is!

The Céna Upanishad of the Sáma-Véda affirms the divinity of the Supreme Being alone, and endeavours to explain the apparent contradiction between its teachings and those of the Veda itself. Plainly discerning the character of the hymns, the writer of the Upanishad states they but represent the attributes of the Supreme Being under the cloak of earthly objects; that their language is poetical and allegorical, and hence the Divine attributes are often represented as independent existences. The real truth, however, seems to be, that the subject-matter of these hymns (probably the oldest records now in existence of the earliest human thought) was floating first as poetry only, and afterwards, when purer conceptions of the Deity had been formed, as tradition, many centuries before they took their present shape. Meanwhile, who can tell the alterations effected in them! Philosophy, on the other hand, does not live by tradition, and the Upanishads, written at a later period than the Sanhitas, were composed by men who, inheriting a poetical temperament, and a national reverence for the sacred books, while at the same time feeling convinced that the hymns did not fully describe the majesty of God, conceived this mode of getting out of the difficulty.

The Céna Upanishad plainly teaches the unity of the Supreme Being, and describes the mode in which he is to be worshipped. It explains that the plurality of deities to be found in the hymns, and their several characters (the Sun, the Fire, the Dawn, &c.), were invented solely for the benefit of those who were unable to comprehend and adore an invisible God; evidently thinking that some religion was better than none at all.

All the Upanishads, and the other religious treatises, agree in this, that all figures are intended to serve *merely*

as representations of God, who is Himself pure Understanding.

The Puranas and Tantras declare again and again that God is but One; inasmuch however as He is above man's entire comprehension, and lest those who will not elevate their minds, and *endeavour* to comprehend Him, should neglect religion altogether, the divinity of other gods is taught and their worship allowed. If we cannot but lament that the human mind should so frequently fail of rising to the infinite heaven; that it should require some lower symbol of the Almighty Creator than his all-pervading Immanence, there is consolation in the thought that after all man's highest ideal must be his highest God. Even those amongst ourselves who think they need no object to remind them of the Universal Father, have very poor ideas of Him. We cannot conceive of God as He is. We each make our own God, and worship that. It cannot be otherwise. So, in those early centuries, while the Brahmans were enabled, through the absence of daily cares, to spend their whole lives in the contemplation of the Unseen, the teeming population around them failed, but through no fault of their own, to rise to the same heights of devotion. To them God must be described in homely terms, and so long as their thoughts, poor though they may have been, were directed to some Being superior to themselves, it mattered little what their conception of that Being was, so long as it was their *best*. It is impossible to say more of Christians.

I cannot do better than to give some extracts from the Upanishads. It will be seen that the spirituality of God is their one great theme. And first from the Céna-Upanishad.

"No vision can approach Him, no language can describe "Him, no intellectual power can compass or determine "Him."

" If you say, 'I know the Supreme Being thoroughly,' you " in truth know very little of Him."

" He who believes he cannot comprehend God *(i.e.,* who " is so impressed with God's infinity and his own littleness) " does in reality know Him."

The Kut'h Upanishad says—

" Knowledge and rites *(i.e.,* contemplation resulting in " knowledge of God, and the offerings prescribed by the " Vedas) both offer themselves to man; knowledge of God " leads to absorption (in Catholic phraseology, salvation), " but rites which have fruition (hope of rewards) for their " object exclude from the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. " These are entirely opposite to each other."

" The soul is not liable to birth nor death. It is mere " understanding; unborn, eternal, without reduction, un- " changeable. Consider the soul as a rider, the body as a " car, the intellect its driver, the mind as its reins; the " external senses are called the horses, restrained by the " mind; external objects are the roads; thus wise men " believe the soul to be united with the body."

" The way to the knowledge of God is considered by " wise men difficult as the passage over the sharp edge of a " razor."

" The soul is of divine origin, by no means different from " its source. Whoever thinks there is variety of intellectual " principle (or duality) undergoes transmigration" (in order that he may learn better?). " God himself imparts his " knowledge to the heart that is freed from passion and " desire." " Save him who believes in the existence of a " God as the *cause* of the universe, no one can have a true " notion of that Being. We must acquire first a belief in " God as the origin of all things; and next, a real know- " ledge of him, to wit, that he is incomprehensible. The " means which lead men to acquire knowledge of his

"existence (contemplation?) graciously conduct them to a "belief in his incomprehensibility."

"The Omnipresent Eternal Spirit should be considered "totally distinct from matter, and the effects of matter."

And from the Ish Upanishad—

"The Supreme Being seems to be distant from those who "have no wish to attain a knowledge of Him, and near to "those who do feel a wish to know Him."

"Only One, without a second," is the invariable description given of the Supreme Being by the Upanishads; and most strongly do they insist that "none but Him should be "adored by wise men."

The Puranas, &c., echo the same sentiment. The Vishnu Purana says—"The vulgar look for their gods in water (27); "men of more extended knowledge in celestial bodies; the "ignorant in wood, brick, and stones; but learned men in "the universal soul."

Another writer (in the Sri Bhagavat) writes still more strongly—"He who attributes a Divine nature to earthen "images, and believes in the holiness of water, and who "neglects to contemplate the nature of the soul, is an ass "amongst cows."

It must be evident from these extracts that whatever may have been the original meaning of the Vedic Sanhitas, and however these may have affected the popular religion in after days, when the poetical descriptions of natural phenomena had crystallized into (to them) meaningless myths, the thinkers of the Upanishad era had as sublime ideas of the Almighty God as have ever presented themselves to the human mind. Nor did the Rishis (28) consider a knowledge of God to be unattainable even by the common

(27) Water is represented as having originated in fire; and as fire was sacred, so water came to be regarded as such.

(28) Or Saints, as the writers of the Vedas were called.

people, else indeed they would not have so unceasingly dwelt upon the absolute importance of attaining it, and upon the utter worthlessness of mere rites and ceremonies. But if such a knowledge of the Supreme Being was difficult to attain, then the greater should the exertions be after it!

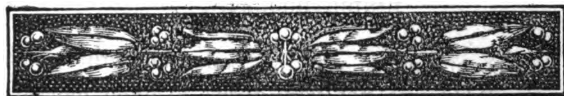
Rites, if indulged in, should be regarded but as schoolmasters leading to something higher, and "once a knowledge of God attained, no need exists for observing any of the ceremonies prescribed by the Shastras." It is difficult to resist the impression that Indian theology did, in some measure, colour the Jewish theology (29). Even in these early days (of the Vedas) there was doubtless communication between India and surrounding countries. As time rolled on, and the conquests of Alexander brought distant countries into contact with each other, a constant stream of travellers must have flowed between the shores of the Ganges (Benares) and the cities of learning in the West—Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, and Rome. In these cities the early converts of Christianity must have been brought face to face with Oriental philosophies as well as with the "new" faith. In Alexandria, especially, must this strange gathering have produced important results. In the third century before our era men of all nations met here in order that Alexandria might be able to boast of such a library as no other city possessed. Here the Old Testament writings, and the Avesta also, were translated into Greek; and we may be quite sure the sages employed in these works did not lose such a favourable opportunity for discussing their several philosophies.

That the Hindu system of religion, as held by the Hindus now, was not affected, is evident from the fact that their

(29) Though Max Müller thinks otherwise; but see an interesting paper on "The Intermingling of Religions," in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1871).

religious books date *prior* to this Alexandrian assembly; whereas, on the other hand, the Septuagint has come down to us as translated under its eclectic influences. Nor did Oriental thought end its work then. The subtleties of Hindu philosophy permeated the schools, and *must* have leavened the Christian literature itself (30).

(30) Such men as Gamaliel, for instance, could not have been ignorant of Buddhistic ethics.



Chapter V.—The Laws of Manu.

The worship of the Vedas was, as I have already stated, domestic in its character; no temple and no altar were required. Though the head of the family might officiate, there was nevertheless a priestly class whose more particular duty it was to superintend such worship, and to offer prescribed sacrifices. (Compare, Judges xvii. and xviii.)

As always happens when one class of a community has privileges which the others lack, the privileged priests soon began to domineer; and finding it greatly to their advantage to be the spiritual guides of the people, they fostered the notion that worship without the presence of a priest was unacceptable to the gods.

They found, moreover, that in order to secure their acquired privileges, it would be desirable to have their authority upon a written word which should command the reverence and obedience of the people. To this movement is to be attributed the Law, or Institutes, of Manu. Here we find laid down with great distinctness of detail the rules that should be binding on the four castes into which the Hindus had by this time been divided. Chief of all was, of course, the priestly caste—the Brahmans—who were said to have proceeded from the mouth of Brahma (31). They were the eldest born, the heirs and possessors of all things.

(31) Max Müller says Brahma means force, will. But taking into account the nature of the narrative given in Manu of the creation, does it not seem probable it has also some connection with the Hebrew Rahm, the womb; that is, that both words are derived from a common root, meaning womb. Moor, in his *Pantheon* (Krishna, p. 211), quotes from a Hindu sacred book; "the great Brahm is my *womb*," etc.

But the corruption as yet (the Laws were written *about* 1300 years B.C.) was not very great. Manu himself is made to say (chapter 2, text 155), that respect and distinction are to be paid to a Brahman only in proportion to his knowledge and worth.

"The soul itself is its own witness; the soul itself is its "own refuge. Offend not thy conscious soul, the supreme 'internal witness of men" (32).

"The chief good here below is in an assemblage of virtue, "wealth, and lawful pleasure."

Manu lays great stress upon the sacred Vedic symbol of the Most High—Aum or Om, which, it is said, was "milked" from the Vedas.

Manu was said to be the son or grandson of the great Brahma, and to have been the agent by whom Brahma made all things. It seems to have been opposed to the philosophy then extant (which extolled spirit at the expense of matter) to conceive of the Supreme Being as being *himself* concerned in the creation of matter. The various deities were therefore regarded at this time as so many manifestations of the One God who, in the Institutes, is called Brahma.

In later years Brahma himself was regarded in three characters: Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Swa, the Destroyer. The deities had, however, so many names, and were conceived of under so many aspects, that before long it became almost impossible to say exactly which was which! It has been said, indeed, that the gods of India outnumber its inhabitants!

In Manu we find the Brahmanical cosmogony. The Supreme Being with a thought created the waters, and placed in them a seed which became an egg. In this he

(32) Compare 1 John iii. 21—"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

was born himself in the form of Brahma, the great forefather of all spirits.

Great stress is laid upon the value of immemorial law, which is said to be transcendent (these old Brahmans were wise in their generation !), and is consequently insisted on. The authority of the Vedas is rigidly upheld, and he who studies them is promised eternal felicity. It must not be forgotten though that the Vedas were written in Sanskrit, and that this language was no longer the vernacular. Moreover, the Brahmans reserved to themselves the right of explaining, and often of reading, them. Women were forbidden to look at the texts of the Vedas alone; they might only study them under the directions of their husbands, who in their turn were instructed by the Brahmans.

"The most exalted of all sciences is to acquire from "the Upanishads a knowledge of God; this ensures "immortality. Twice-born men may soon acquire endless "felicity."

It is curious and instructive to meet in this ancient work the phrase "twice-born." It refers to the assumption, by young Brahmans, of the sacred thread. The words occur repeatedly in Manu.

The doctrine of transmigration is also mentioned in the Laws, as well as in the Upanishads. As, however, I shall return to this subject when I treat of Buddhism, I will only now give one or two extracts from Manu respecting it, without commenting on them.

"He who frequently performs disinterested acts of wor- "ship becomes for ever exempt from a body composed of "the five elements. He sacrifices his own spirit by fixing it "on the spirit of God."

"The Divine Spirit no doubt produces, by a chain of

"causes and effects consistent with free-will, the connected "series of acts performed by embodied souls" (33).

"Thus the man who perceives in his own soul the Supreme "soul present in all creatures, acquires equanimity towards 'them all, and shall be absorbed at last in the highest "essence, even that of the Almighty himself."

The Laws of Manu contain many admirable regulations, and strict morality is enjoined. It would be unreasonable, however, to find in them principles and sentiments which can be the product only of long experience and a high civilization. For instance, trial by test is advocated, and when an inferior injures a man of superior caste the *lex talionis* is reverted to. Notwithstanding these faults, the Laws of Manu deserve a high place among the world's codes.

To this period belongs the Zend-avesta, or sacred books of the Zoroastrians. Worshippers of the Sun, and Aryan in descent (as were the Hindus), this sect seems to have separated from the Vedic party—perhaps before the Vedas were written; while, indeed, the myths were gradually assuming shape; and at last to have produced its own revelation—a revelation that was in many respects an improvement upon the Brahmanical. Instead of the numerous manifestations of the Deity (as in the Upanishads), which, as we have seen, came to be regarded as so many distinct deities, Zoroaster taught that as Fire was the source of light, and that as that element must be in some way connected with the nature of the Supreme Being himself, the Sun, as the chief apparent source of Fire, was the only object deserving of man's worship.

Many of the doctrines taught in the Zend-avesta are similar to those of the Vedas. The followers of Zoroaster

(33) One system of Hindu philosophy taught that all "soul" war part of the Supreme Spirit, inhabiting human bodies for a time only.

are but a small minority of the population of Hindostan. Indeed, Berghaus omits all mention of them in his table, showing the percentage of the world's different religionists! They are known now by the name of Parsis. They are to be found mostly in the Bombay Presidency. Their philosophy and system of ethics were very excellent. The following are two extracts from their book:—

"He (the Supreme Being) is without beginning or end. "He is living, wise, powerful, independent, and just. His "knowledge includes all that is seen or heard, and all that "exists. From Him nothing is hid."

"Among the most resplendent, powerful, and glorious of "His servants, who are free from superior bodies and mat-"ter, there is none God's enemy or rival, or disobedient, or "cast down, or annihilated."

There is here the old distinction between spirit and matter, and a broad catholic spirit of comprehension. A belief in one true God, an honest worship of Him, love to all men, and a tender regard for dumb animals, which are the distinguishing tenets of the Parsis, enable their religion to compare favourably with many others which boast of their fancied superiority; and if the Sun is regarded as the manifestation of the Most High, it may surely be urged that the luminary of day is a far more fitting emblem of God's majesty and impartiality than the poor conception of Him too many of us have. That the Zoroastrians do not worship the Sun *merely as* the Sun is evident from passages in the Zend-avesta itself.

Max Müller gives an extract from the 43rd chapter of the Yaçna, and which instantly suggests the Hebrew Bard's meditations on the same grand theme (see Psalms xix., 5, 6; and chap. civ. 19; see also Job xxvi. 7)—"Who has made "a path for the Sun, and for the Stars? Who makes the "moon to increase and to decrease? Who holds the earth "and the clouds that they do not fall?"



CHAPTER VI.—BUDDHISM.

MEANTIME, the corruptions of the Brahmanical system were yearly increasing. The arrogance of the priests was becoming excessive; and the natural consequence—a revolution in religious matters—took place.

The story of Sakya-muni (or Gautama, or Siddhartha, as he was variously called), better known to us as Buddha, need not here be told. It is tolerably well known, and cannot but command our respectful attention. Convinced that men had not right views of things, and angered at the wickedness of the Brahmans, whose self-interest caused them to lay such heavy burdens upon the people, Sakyamuni resolved to leave his princely home, and to seek in retirement that truth which he felt must be his. This truth revealed itself to him as he was sitting under a tree, and from that time he called himself Buddha, the Enlightened. This was about 600 years B.C.

His system of religion gradually spread among the masses of India, until, in the middle of the third century before our era, it was the recognised religion of the Peninsula. About 200 years B.C. Buddhism was taken into China, where his name was corrupted into Fo-to and Fo. At present about one in three of the entire population of the globe are Buddhists! (34).

(34) The Brahmanists number about one in seven; Mohammedans about one in six; Christians a little less than Buddhists; while 0·3 are Jews, the remainder 8·7 being what Berghaus calls "nondescript heathen."

The Buddhistic Sacred Book is the Tripitaka; its moral code has been declared to be second to none save that of Jesus, and only second here more on account of its disbelief in immortality than in any shortcoming of its teachings. As in Christ there were neither Jews nor Greeks, bondmen nor free, so with Buddha distinctions of caste were unknown. All men were equal, and all were to participate in such salvation as his system offered. None were to be lost, and, better still, the doctrine of transmigration—which was at this period regarded with terror (thanks to the priests!)—was denied. Charity, kindness, and compassion to all—these were the cardinal virtues.

Such doctrines could not but be acceptable to the priest-ridden community; and as the lower castes had nothing to lose, but everything to gain, by its abolition, caste was no longer maintained. Inter-marriages took place; pollution was not thought of; all were brothers. The effects of this temporary breaking up of caste is now seen in India; for Buddhism failing to retain its hold, Brahmanism once more became the ascendant, and with the resuscitation of caste came numberless sub-divisions according to the amount of departure which had been made during the inter-regnum. The Brahmans alone, who had everything to lose and nothing to gain, had stood aloof from the change they could neither avoid nor control, and had maintained their caste in its integrity.

The religion of Buddha was extremely simple, in striking contrast to the traditions of the Brahmans, whose doctrines, as well as self-assumptions, it emphatically opposed. Though Buddhism had an order of priests, or, more correctly, monks (who, by the bye, were tonsured!), its ritual was plain, and dogmas were conspicuous by their absence. Its priests congregated in monasteries, but were at any time free to leave these and re-join the world, and marry. After

the death of Buddha, magnificent temples were reared all over India, but in these, contrasting strongly with the Brahmanical sanctuaries, the only image was one of Buddha himself, and a shrine containing his relics. The sayings attributed to Buddha breathe a spirit of lofty morality, to which the nineteenth century would do well to give heed, and many of his aphorisms strengthen the supposition that the East in no slight degree leavened the more Western ethical philosophy.

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought. "If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows "him as the wheel follows the foot of him who draws the "cart."

"Let a man overcome evil with good."

The chief characteristic of Buddha's teaching lay in his doctrine of *Nirvana*. His meditations had revealed to him the truth of four axioms which he expressed thus—

The existence of Pain.

The cause of Pain is Desire.

Desire can only cease when Nirvana is attained.

The way to Nirvana.

To attain Nirvana men must practise the following virtues, or perfections: The giving of alms, morality, science, energy, patience, and charity.

To understand Nirvana we must go back a little way and examine what had hitherto been taught respecting a future life.

I have already remarked that Hindu philosophers had discovered a difference between spirit and matter. How this difference was noticed I can best explain by a reference to what Max Müller has said concerning the origin of Mythology.

The Greek word for breath was psuchē—blowing. One peculiarity of a dead body was that it did not breathe; in

fact, the ancients knew no more of a dead man than that he had ceased to breathe. The breath was the life, and it had left the body. But of "breath" itself, they knew nothing, save that it was the *active principle*, and if it was possible to have a body (a dead body) without the breath, was it not also possible to have the breath without the body? Hence arose the query, where did the "breath" go when it left a man? The Greeks said to Hades, the place of the invisible. As Max Müller says—that the breath had become invisible, had fled, was a simple matter of fact; that it had gone to Hades was mythology (35).

Now the Hindus had the same problem before them.

The departure of the breath, and at the same time its evident importance as the very life itself, doubtless suggested the first idea of immortality to man. The Old Testament is noticeably free from allusions to an after life; and the statement that immortality was brought to light by Christ, is an additional proof that but slight faith was placed in the doctrine of immortality before his time. But during the ages prior to his advent the conception of an abode where disembodied spirits dwelt—a conception to which the current mythology only added strength—had been gradually assuming form. Jesus, gathering up the floating thoughts, and perceiving the folly of longer waiting for a temporal deliverance for his countrymen, gave to the world *his* notions of a future life—notions which blended the material with the spiritual.

The vivid imagination, and deep poetical feeling which produced the Vedic hymns, still had a home in the Aryan heart, and calling speculation to their aid, produced the doctrine of Transmigration. In the Veda itself we find no

(35) See the interesting argument by Mr. Müller in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1871; and of which the above is simply an elaboration.

mention of metempsychosis; the gods were scarcely superior to men (36)—were not their own ancestors among them?—and hence a kind of immortality was hoped for and, to some extent, taught.

But in process of time the conceptions of the Deity grew in purity, and philosophy evolved the doctrine (natural to men who regarded the breath as the life, or the soul, and independent of the body) that the soul was opposed to body, and spirit to matter. These considerations, aided doubtless by the inability to explain the more than instinct of many animals on any other hypothesis, led to a belief that after death the soul went to heaven for a time, and then resumed earthly form again, either in some animal, or else in human shape (37).

"The Kut'h Upanishad taught that "some who are ignorant " of this doctrine (of the divine origin of the soul, by no " means different from its source,) re-appear in the animal " shape; some assume the form of trees, according to their " conduct and knowledge during their lives."

The same authority has this—" If man can acquire a " knowledge of God in this world before the fall of his body

(36) There can be no doubt that the deeper philosophy goes, and the wider bounds science sets, the greater and more sublime will be the God conceived of. This is, perhaps, contrary to the common belief, that savages, from their ignorance, and because of the great preponderance of awe in their conceptions, invest their Deity with powers which *we* assign, in general speech, to nature; but I believe it to be a fact nevertheless.

(37) The Moonduk Upanishad of the Atharva Veda (the latest of all the Vedas) has this passage—" Those who engage in various manners of " rites and sacrifices (only?) from their excessive desire of fruition (or " rewards), remain destitute of knowledge of God, *and descend to this " world again after the time of their celestial qualification is expired.* " These believe that the performance of rites and sacrifices prescribed " by the Vedas are the more beneficial, and have no idea that the know- " ledge of, and faith in, *one* God are the only true sources of bliss." Origen also held that " all spirits are purified from stain, and then reabsorbed " into Deity, from which they emanated; afterwards they again leave " it . . and are condemned to re-enter bodies," etc. Where did Origen get this idea from? From India?

" (that is, before he dies), he becomes happy for ever; other-
" wise, he assumes new forms in different mansions."

The majority of the people, ignorant of Sanskrit, and under the spiritual subjection of the Brahmans, had learnt to expect nothing for themselves but continual reappearance in various shapes, and this through never-ending cycles! Buddha came as a saviour to such, and sweeping away the whole Brahmanical system, proclaimed a final state of rest, or, as some think, of extinction. This condition into which the soul entered at death was called Nirvana. Its meaning can only be ascertained by carefully examining the teaching of Buddha. Buddha seems to have been of an extremely sensitive nature. He saw pain and misery around him, and felt his utter inability to alleviate it. That pain exists was evident to all, and the cause of it was, in his opinion, desire. Hence our affections must be destroyed, as without them we should not be tied to earth; without affections to guide (or rule?) us, we should find no objects with which to sympathise, and neither pain nor misery would be noticed by us. Existence here was no blessing; was it not rather a curse under the present circumstances?

Buddha is said to have had no belief in the existence of a God, but because he hesitated to express a belief in one, we need not rush to such a conclusion. Many a philosopher in our own day has failed to see how a wise and merciful God, as the one Christendom adores is said to be, can allow wickedness to ride so rampant if He is indeed all-powerful. The origin of evil has ever taxed man's powers to discover. Because a Hindu philosopher who, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, would not, *by his own expressed words*, lend his authority to the commonly received conceptions of the Supreme Being; and, on the other hand, failed to unravel satisfactorily to himself the problem of good and evil—leaving it an open question so

far as his teaching, confined to morals, was concerned, whether there were a God or no—is no reason why *we* should say he did not believe in a Supreme Being. Buddha was the last man who would say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" and can we doubt that he who taught such a high morality, believed in his inner soul in one Absolute Good?

The followers of Buddha, not possessed of his wisdom, proclaimed the doctrine of extinction; but history, if it teaches anything, teaches this, that the purest doctrines ever held by any reformer are certain to be corrupted before the next generation has passed away. In the doctrinal world, as in the physical world, evolution and development are always at work. Christianity itself is a notable example of this.

For centuries the religion of Buddha reigned supreme in India, and had it not been for this after-development (the mind of man cannot rest satisfied with a negation of Deity) (38) it perhaps might still have been so.

(38) Nirvana *now* is regarded as a Paradise. This is a still further development.



Chapter VII.—Hindu Philosophy.

The Brahmans were not idle meantime. Their occupation to a large extent gone, they devoted their leisure to developing their systems of philosophy—of which they had six. These were affected of course by the prevalent form ot religion, and one system taught that the existence of a personal God could not be proved.

Strange to say, these various systems, entirely opposed to each other on vital points as they were, all based their reasonings on the Vedic literature. The Vedas could not be gainsayed. The only thing left was for each system to select those portions which seemed to favour its own particular theory, and then to assert that the Veda must have held that theory.

The Philosophical Systems, therefore, had their respective followers, neither party of whom considered the other as heretics, for each quoted the Vedas, which in their turn were regarded by each as a Divine revelation—as Kanáda (the Vais' Eshika philosopher) says, "The Veda is a revelation of him who is the Lord."

The mutual reverence for their Sacred Books prompted a spirit of charity towards those whose philosophical views differed from one's own. A lesson here which we of Christian Europe have not yet learnt !

In a translation of aphorisms from the Vais' Eshika, published in 1851, we get the philosophy of Kanáda. Kanáda, who is called the great saint, says—"The pre-eminent way

" to the attainment of the perception of the real nature of " soul is the knowledge of truth (derived) from (the know- " ledge of) the (mutual) agreements and disagreements of " the six categories; and this (knowledge of the mutual " relations of the categories) may be completed by means of " duty characterised by forbearance" (from works positively evil, &c.)

Duty is described as that from which there results " emancipation" through " exaltation," while exaltation is explained as the knowledge of reality, and emancipation as the absolutely final cessation of pain.

Kanáda's " six categories" were these—Substance, Quality, Action, Community, Distinction, and Correction (39).

Substance comprised earth, water, light, soul, mind. Quality comprised colour, numbers, thoughts, pleasures, &c. Action comprised elevation, depression, contraction, dilatation, motion, &c.; and was besides the common cause of the last three categories.

Another system of philosophy was the Sa'nkhya. It taught that prosperity was the fruit of former virtue, and adversity of former vice.

The Nya'ya Philosophy offered a solution of the question, How man could attain his chief end? " The knowledge of " truth, or what is what," it said, " assists us. This know- " ledge alone, however, will not take us there, though it " will help to remove all such misery as flows from false " knowledge."

The philosophical treatise of Nya'ya commences with this curious passage—" In order to produce good luck, we medi- " tate on the beauty of the toe-nails of Bhavāni, which " (beauty) taking an exquisite aspect as it was associated

(39) A later writer, Annam Bhatta, says Kanáda's *seven* categories were Substance, Quality, Action, Genus, Difference, Cohesion, and Non-existence.

"with the ruddy lustre of newly applied lac-dye, seemed a "sort of lovely ornament of Sira's head, when his head was "bowed down (at her feet) to deprecate her haughty dis-"pleasure."

But the greatest Philosopher of all was Byas, who wrote the Vedanta, or summary of the Vedas, about 2000 years ago, or a hundred years B.C. I cannot do better than quote from it.

"It is absolutely necessary for mankind to acquire know "ledge respecting the Supreme Being, who is the subject of "discourse in all the Vedas."

"Of Him the Vedas say, The Supreme Being is not "comprehensible by vision, or by any other of the organs of "sense; nor can he be perceived by means of devotion, or "virtuous practices."

"He sees everything, hears everything, though never "directly heard of. He is neither short, nor is he long; "inaccessible to the reasoning faculty, not to be compassed "by description; beyond the limits of the explanations of "the Vedas, or of human conception."

Byas then goes on to show that we cannot definitely assert *what* or *how* God is; we can only explain him by his works. "He by whom the birth, existence, and annihilation of the "world is regulated, is the Supreme Being."

Byas alludes to the high regard in which the Vedas are held, and says that though they are called eternal, yet "all the texts and parts of the Vedas were created." God is the cause of all the Vedas; nay more, He is the cause of all things! The Void Space, the Air, Light, Nature, the Soul, are in the Vedas spoken of in high terms, it is true, but there are yet higher terms proclaiming the sovereignty of the Supreme Being, and that soul alone can enjoy happiness who is "joined" to Him.

Byas takes up the theory broached by the Upanishads,

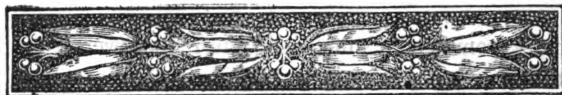
namely, that the Vedas are simply allegorical when they refer divinity to those countless objects to whom they direct adoration. "Fire is His head, the Sun and the Moon are His two eyes," &c.; and as such—as parts of the Deity—are they deserving of honour.

God was regarded as immanent in the universe. He was in everything, and everything was in Him—a doctrine which, though it meant nothing more than that God was the real source of existence, and that nothing was but by His will, was singularly open to misconstruction by those who had no very exalted notion of the Deity. The doctrine indeed was carried to an extreme to which it is unsafe, *save in philosophy*, to carry such doctrines, for all that exists was said to be God, and "whatever we smell or taste is the Supreme Being."

That all this was but allegory is evident from the many fine passages in which the intense immateriality of God is insisted upon. "He bears no figure nor form; His existence had no cause.

"In *any* place which renders the mind easy man should adore God."

That God is the soul of the Universe, is said by Ram Mohun Roy, to be the sum of the notion concerning Him in the Vedant.



Chapter VIII.—Brahmanism—Suttee, and Infant Marriage.

When Buddhism first commenced to lose its hold upon the people of India cannot now be ascertained. It is rather startling that for most of the facts concerning the history of India we are indebted, not to Indian historians (of whom there does not appear to have been one), but to Chinese travellers. We learn from them that towards the close of the fourth century after Christ Buddhism was rapidly losing ground; indeed, many of its temples were even thus early in ruins. Its followers would appear to have been driven by degrees towards the north-west of the Peninsula, where the remains of cave temples give evidence of their having suffered persecution.

Some of these ruins are very large, those for instance at Elephanta, about seven miles from Bombay. Before the twelfth century closed all traces of Buddhism, save the temple ruins, had disappeared from India proper, finding homes more congenial to the north of the Himalayas, in Siberia, China, Japan, Ceylon, and some of the islands in the Indian Archipelago. Its adherents now number about 450 millions!

After the retreat of its opponent, Brahmanism urged its pretensions with still greater force, and till a few years ago the whole of India was under the complete control of this priestly class.

The doctrine of Nirvana, introduced by Buddha, greatly influenced the conception of the Future Life which the

Brahmans promulgated after their return to power. Transmigration was still believed in, but it was by no means so prominent a feature as it had been. Absorption took its place.

"That person who understands and believes the Almighty Being will be absorbed in Him."

"He who in life was devoted to the Supreme Being shall, "after death, be absorbed in Him, and again be liable neither "to birth nor death, reduction nor augmentation."

"When a wise man perceives the resplendent God, the "omnipresent cause, he becomes perfect, and obtains "entire absorption." When a man knows God "the effects "of the good or evil actions, committed now *or in preceding* "*shapes*, are annihilated."

It is difficult to say precisely what "absorption" means. Some assert it is but another mode of ceasing to be; but it must be remembered that their philosophy taught there was but *one* spirit, and *this* was opposed to matter. The portion of the "spirit" possessed by each individual at his death returned therefore to its primal source. As their writings say—"As rivers flowing into the ocean lose their respective "appellations and forms, so do those who are absorbed into "the Supreme Immaterial and Omnipresent Existence."

The Vedas and the Laws of Manu were still held up for reverence, but being written in Sanskrit, and no translation being allowed, reference to these authorities could not be made by any save the few who, on account of their caste, were permitted to learn the sacred language. These ancient books were thus to all intents and purposes ignored, and the modern writings of the Brahmans substituted as guides of conduct.

It is to these that the idolatry of India, together with the absurd and cruel customs of widow-burning (Suttee) and infant-marriage, are to be attributed. It must be admitted

that the numberless idols to be met with in almost every house are *not* regarded as representations of the Deity; these are themselves the people's gods, and to *them* on their *own* account is worship now paid. The Brahmans know full well this is contrary to the teaching of their Sacred Books, but like their contemporaries in Europe, they find it to their advantage to prevent all free enquiry, and to prescribe endless rites and ceremonies and festivals for the propitiation of the millions of gods in which they have taught the Hindus to believe.

Then as to Suttee, or the concremation of widows. There is *no warrant whatever*, either in the Vedas or in Manu, for this horrible custom. In Manu, it is true, widows are forbidden to marry again; but this is a very different thing from calling upon these poor creatures to ascend their husbands' funeral pile!

The Veda says—"While life may be preserved, it ought not to be destroyed," and Manu invariably speaks of the Vedas as the highest authority. It is impossible to conceive that systems which inculcated such tenderness to dumb animals as the *ancient* Hindu religious systems did, should even for a moment entertain such a thought that widows must consider it a religious duty to sacrifice themselves in such a manner.

While deprecating undue interference of the ruling power with the social and religious customs of the nation, I candidly admit that the English Government was wise when it decided to put down this inhuman rite. But while saying this, I must protest against the Government doing things by halves. The concremation of widows, it must be remembered, was considered by Hindus as a *religious duty*, and it would have been not only wise, but kind, to have translated into the vernacular, and widely distributed, if not the whole of the ancient books, to which even the Brahmans own sub-

mission, at least those parts of them which teach the sacredness of life (40).

The origin of this custom has not yet been discovered. Let us see if a study of some Hindu customs may help us. The marriage of his children is the chief object of a man's life. Great ingenuity is exercised to marry daughters because it entails expense on the parents; whereas a son always receives payment with his (I cannot say *his* "chosen") bride. A poor man therefore regards a family of girls with dread, and many a poor little maid has been murdered in her infancy in order to avoid the expense of marrying her. (Among the Sudras the case is otherwise.) On the other hand, the Kulin Brahmans are a privileged class, and amongst their many "perquisites" appears to be that of marrying as many girls as they choose. These "wives" they leave in their respective homes, visiting them in turn. No payment is exacted by the girl's parents. The fact of her being married, and to a Brahman, has relieved them from a dreaded burden! Is it not probable that such a custom *may* have led to the other one—Suttee?

"With the Hindus marriage is an entirely religious con-"tract, and affects their welfare here and hereafter. There "is no salvation for a man who has no children; for the "offering of funeral cakes by his offspring *are the only means* "*by which he can escape a hell called* Pût—a place for those "who die childless, whatever their lives may have been. Thus "procreation is made the primary object of marriage" (41).

This extract from a paper on Hindu marriage, and written by a Hindu, presents a forcible example of the corrup-

(40) It may be objected that *this* would be an interference, inasmuch as the Brahmans declare it wrong to translate the Sacred Books, or even to let *anyone* read them. But to this I answer that the Books themselves do not say so!

(41) See the article on *Hindu Marriage* in the Journal of the National Indian Association, 1871. (P. 149 *et. seq.*)

tions which crept into the national religion. I have already shown that the Upanishads, Manu, and the later systems of philosophy taught that salvation (with the Hindus, re-absorption with the Deity) followed a knowledge of God; here, however, in modern Hinduism, a person who dies, childless, "whatever his life may have been," goes to Pût! The result is, that children, of both sexes, are married soon after they become seven years of age—sometimes even before; of course, as the Hindus themselves now see, the degeneracy of the nation is bound to follow such an abominable system. At such an age, the children are not expected to have any choice—their wives and husbands are chosen for them by their parents or guardians. When married, the girl is taken to her husbands' home, (in India families live after the patriarchal mode) where her life is often passed in misery and servitude.

Both Hindus and Mohammedans deny that the Zenana system and polygamy originated among themselves. As *Zenana* is a Persian word, and *Harem* (which means the same thing) is an Arabian word, it is probable that both are right. The seclusion of women was probably the result of polygamy, but when and where this first arose it is impossible to say. The way in which reference is made to women in the Sacred Books of the Hindus prove that they were in early times considered as the help-mate, if not the equal, of man. Mr. K. C. Sen says, "we find in the code of Manu high ethical precepts enjoining the necessity of female education, and of respect for the fair sex."



Chapter IX.—The Brahmo Somaj.

Under these heavy burdens India was groaning, unrelieved by Mohammedan sway, when she first came into contact with Saxon civilization. Constant intercourse with the British could not but excite the stagnant thoughts of the more educated of the Hindus, and the leaven worked its way. Idolatry began to lose its hold, and the folly of praying to idols became apparent. Reformers rose up from among themselves, who hailed the British ascendancy as India's salvation. Foremost among these was the Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, who devoted his time and energies and wealth to make the masses acquainted with the sacred writings from which the Brahmans professed to derive their authority; but which, on the contrary, were quite opposed to all their claims. The Rajah proved conclusively that neither Suttee nor Idolatry were parts of the ancient religion, but later corruptions introduced by an interested priesthood (42).

Of late years a movement towards a pure worship and an eclectic religion has been steadily progressing. The Brahmo Somaj (or church of the True God) is indeed an emphatic protest against the idolatry and superstition which has for so long kept India enslaved. One of its members wrote not long ago—"We try principally and first of all to influence "the religious consciousness, the very source of the emotions "and will, and to lead every man to that natural course of

(42) Ram Mohun Roy was born in 1774 (or 1780?), and died at Bristol in 1833, while on a visit to this country.

"development which is peculiar to his own case. The "matter lies absolutely between him and his God. . . . "Our church has attempted to be faithful to Christendom, "because to Christendom we think Theism owes much more "than to any other truth" (43).

(43) See the *Inquirer* for August 3rd, 1872.

May this movement spread in India! It is not by asserting the worthlessness of their own religious books—books as sacred to them as the Bible is to Christians—that the inhabitants of Hindustan are to be brought to the knowledge of God. Paul's spirit and very words must be imitated: "Him "whom ye *ignorantly* worship declare we unto you," is all we must even dare to say. The Supreme Being is but One, and whether we call Him Jehovah, God, Brahma, or Vishnu, matters not. These are but the *designations* by which He is called: He can be KNOWN in the heart alone.

Augustine wrote: "What is now called the Christian "religion has existed among the ancients, and was not "absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ "came in the flesh; from which time the true religion, "*which existed already*, began to be called Christian."

Let me conclude with a sentence from Don Emilio Castelar's *Old Rome and New Italy*:—"Those who look upon "life from one side, upon time from one age, . . the "doctrines of *one* religion only, humanity from one people, "will *never* understand the human mind."



APPENDIX.

As little is known of the literature of the East, whose dense population is too often carelessly described as *heathen*, I annex a few quotations from various writers. I am indebted for them to the works of the Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, Mr. Thomas Roebuck, Sir William Jones, and Professor Max Müller.

From the Vedas.

"All descriptions employed to describe the Supreme Being are incorrect." (God cannot be described.)

"He who worships any God but the Supreme Being, and thinks that He is distinct and inferior to such god, knows nothing."

"None but the Supreme Being is to be worshipped. A wise man should adore nought except Him."

"He who has true faith in the Omnipresent Supreme Being may eat all that exists." (Compare 1 Cor. viii.)

From the Writings of Abulfazl (Minister of Akbar.)

"The fire of the Sun is the tooth of God's sovereignty. If there were no light nor fire, there would be neither food nor medicines. It is the source of man's existence, and of the duration of life; therefore there can be nothing improper in its veneration. Akbar felt convinced there were sensible men in all religions, and abstemious thinkers and men endowed with miraculous powers among all nations."

From the Writings of Faizi, Brother to Abulfazl.

"O Thou who existest from eternity, and abidest for ever, sight cannot bear thy light, praise cannot express thy perfection. . . . To think of Thee destroys reason, Thy essence confounds thought. . . . Human knowledge and thought combined can only spell the first letter of the alphabet of Thy love."

From Confucius.

"What you do not like done to yourself, do not do that to others."

From Lao-tse.

"There is an Infinite Being who existed before heaven and earth."

Hindustani Proverbs.

"God only knows the things that pertain to God."

"God is monarch of the heart."

"The name of God will endure."

Persian Proverbs.

"The water of life is in darkness." (Nothing excellent is obtainable without labour.)

"That becomes easy which you have firmly resolved upon."

"No one hath seen God; we know his existence by reason."

"We are God's creatures, and the world belongs to God alone."

"Confer benefits on him who has injured thee."

The Sama Veda.

The Sáma Veda is *always sung*. Those who have heard Hindus sing will doubtless wonder at this statement; for to European ears the Indian song seems to have no melody, while it is quite devoid of harmony. Yet, strange to say, the Hindus complain of the monotony of European music! The reason is this: the Hindu employs forty-two modes in which to write his music; we use but two—the major and minor. Further, the Hindu never modulates, and but seldom closes on the tonic chord. To our ears the singing of the Sáma Veda seems more like a low, almost monotonous chanting. (See Report of Mr. C. B. Clarke, Inspector of Schools in East Bengal.)



MANU.

"If then we look at the ancient literature of India, even during its best period, we shall find the most remarkable evidence of the uncontrolled ascendancy of the imagination. In the first place we have the striking fact that scarcely any attention has been paid to prose composition; all the best writers having devoted themselves to poetry as being most congenial to the national habits of thought. Their works on grammar, on law, on history, on medicine, on mathematics, on geography, and on metaphysics, are nearly all poems, and are put together according to a regular system of versification. The consequence is that, while prose writing is utterly despised, the art of poetry has been cultivated so assiduously that the Sanskrit can boast of metres more numerous and more complicated than have ever been possessed by any of the European languages. The peculiarity in the form of Indian literature is accompanied by a corresponding peculiarity in its spirit. For it is no exaggeration to say that in that literature *everything is calculated to set the reason of man at defiance.* An imagination, luxuriant even to disease, runs riot on every occasion. This is particularly seen in those productions which are most eminently national, such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, and the Puranas in general. But we also find it in their geographical and chronological systems, which of all others might be supposed least liable to imaginative flights."

I have quoted this at length from "Buckle's History of

Civilization," because such remarks from such an authority carry weight, and they are calculated to discourage a study of Hindu literature. But, as I have shown in the former paper on "Hindu Thought," this literature is exceedingly extensive and beautiful. Besides the intrinsic value of a literature bearing traces of the early workings of the human mind, there are in the sacred books of India wonderful veins of eternal truth which cannot fail to find responsive sympathies in all hearts.

So far from Indian literature being peculiar on account of the poetical form it took, we have seen that it could not well have done otherwise. The early days of a race *must* be poetical, and it is *then* that a language lends itself most easily to the poet. Experience, and with experience a commonplace contentment, has not been purchased; surprise at the daily rising of the sun, awe at the phenomena of nature, astonishment at their own varied powers, have not yet given way in men to a settled belief that all things would thus continue. Their very sentiments being poetical, their speech and literature could not fail to be so likewise. The Rig Veda hymns existed as hereditary tradition long before they took their present written form, and it was fortunate that poetry and not prose was the instinctive medium by which *our* ancestors expressed their thoughts, because, it is almost needless to say, a poem was far more likely to be remembered than any prose composition. If poetry was more congenial to the national habits of (Indian) thought, it was so not because the thought was Indian, but because it was *early human* thought! Look where we will, we shall find the oldest literature of every ancient people to be in poetry and *not* in prose.

Nor can I endorse Mr. Buckle's opinion that in Hindu literature "everything is calculated to set the reason of man at defiance." The amount of ancient Hindu literature which was available for Mr. Buckle's researches must have been

very small, and I am inclined to think that the little he did know of it was obtained from foreign translations of (as compared to the whole) minute fragments. It is only of very late years that the Sanskrit language has been mastered, and even now it is by no means unusual for two scholars to give slightly varying translations of the same passage. But without being hypercritical, would it be very extraordinary to find a great deal in the early literature of a race somewhat opposed to the reason of man? The error lies in contrasting with what is truth now (the *present* reason of man), that which appeared to be truth at the time such literature flourished.

For instance, no one would think of asserting that ancient books, which described the earth as a flat plain and the sun as revolving round it, set defiance to the reason of man. If, however, the scientific discoveries of late centuries be ignored, and such doctrines concerning the earth and the sun were *now* attempted to be promulgated, the holder of such doctrines might with consistency be said to set man's reason at defiance. Even comparing sacred writings with sacred writings we must still defend the Hindu national literature from the charge of being exceptionally sensational. What more startling and romantic a tale, for instance, could be devised than that of the infant Moses, born of a despised race, saved from a violent death, exposed to the mercy of the elements, fostered by a king's daughter, and finally destined to be the deliverer of his people? Yet a similar lot, told in remarkably similar language, is related in the Mahabharat of Kirshna, and such instances might be increased a hundredrold. The story of Sakya-Muni, or Buddha, is not less wonderful than the stories told of many an old Jewish prophet. No; Mr. Buckle seems to have met with portions of the Vedic hymns which ascribe divinity to natural phenomena, and, momentarily forgetful of the Iliad and of the Odyssey, of the Æneid and the

Scandinavian sagas, immediately to have concluded that the Indian "imagination, luxuriant even to disease, run riot on every occasion, and more particularly in those productions which are most eminently national."

One of the "*most* eminent national productions" is the book of the Institutes or the Laws of Manu. I will give a few extracts from this celebrated work, not only to show how very erroneous an impression is conveyed by Mr. Buckle, but also to incite a more careful study of Hindu literature—a study that will more than repay the closest application. I follow Mr. Haughton's edition of Sir William Jones' translation (London, 1825).

The subjects of which Manu treats are twelve, namely, the Creation; Education; Marriage; Economics and Private Morals; Diet, Purification and Women; Devotion; Government; Judicature; the Commercial and Servile Classes; the Mixed Classes and Times of Distress; Penance and Expiation; Transmigration and Final Beatitude. The chapter on the Creation is doubtless fanciful, but what can else be expected of a discourse concerning the creative agency and creative acts of which it was quite impossible for the writer to know anything. As a speculation concerning the origin of all things the opening chapter of Manu will nevertheless be read with intense interest. Text 96 of this chapter says,—

"Of created things, the more excellent are those which are animated; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence; of the intelligent, mankind; and of man, the sacerdotal class."

Text 97. "Of priests, those eminent in learning; of the learned, those who know their duty; of those who know it, such as perform it virtuously; and of the virtuous those who seek beatitude from a perfect acquaintance with scriptural doctrine."

From the chapter on Education I select text 13:—

"A knowledge of right is a sufficient incentive for men unattached to wealth or to sensuality; and to those who seek a knowledge of right, the supreme authority is divine revelation."

Text 57. "Excessive eating is prejudicial to health, to fame, and to future bliss in heaven; it is injurious to virtue, and odious among men."

Text 85. "The act of repeating his (God's) Holy Name is ten times better than the appointed sacrifice; a hundred times better when it is heard by no man; and a thousand times better when it is purely mental."

Text 94. "Desire is never satisfied with the enjoyment of desired objects."

Text 114. "Sacred Learning, having approached a Brahman, said to him, 'I am thy precious gem; preserve me with care, deliver me not to a scorner.'"

Text 228. "Let every man constantly do what may please his parents."

In the chapter of Economics at text 175 we read,—

"Let a man continually take pleasure in truth, in justice, in laudable practices, and in purity."

From the chapter on Judicature I select the following:—

Text 15. "Justice being destroyed, will destroy; being preserved, will preserve: it must never, therefore, be violated."

Text 85. "The sinful have said in their hearts, 'None see us;' yes, the gods distinctly see them, and so does the spirit within their breasts."

Text 203. "One commodity, mixed with another, shall never be sold as *unmixed;* nor a bad commodity as good."

The final chapter on Transmigration and Final Beatitude furnishes us with these:—

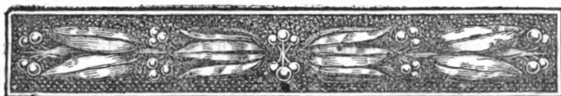
Text 3. "Action, either mental, verbal, or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit as itself is good or evil."

Text 84. "Among all those good acts performed in this world, *said the sages*, is no single act held more powerful than the rest in leading them to beatitude?"

Text 85. "Of all those duties, *answered Bhrigu*, the principal is to acquire from the Upanishads a true knowledge of one supreme God; that is the most exalted of all sciences because it ensures immortality."

Text 118. * * * "For, when he (a Brahman) contemplates the boundless universe existing in the divine spirit, he cannot give his heart to iniquity."

I do not wish to be understood that the whole of the Institutes is in the same style; there are numberless instructions and regulations which to us seem absurd. But it must be remembered that the Laws of Manu were written many hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago when the constitution of society was very different from what it now is. It must also be borne in mind that Hindus versed in their country's literature are of opinion that many of the Laws of Manu were intended for the first three ages of the world (the Hindu chronology is very puzzling), and are by no means intended for the present age. Another fact worth remembering is this, that if sciences are best understood when studied comparatively, so will the real beauty and force of civilizations and their literatures be discovered when a comparison is made between them. If Manu's Institutes contain much that is strange and "reason-defying," the same must be said of codes belonging to later ages, not even excepting the present!



THE PASSION-PLAY AT OBER-AMMERGAU.

It was in August, 1871, that, accompanied by a friend, I visited the lovely village of Ober-Ammergau for the purpose of seeing the Passion-Play. The journey was a tedious one to us, for time was short: leaving London on Wednesday morning we had to reach Munich by Friday. By dint of travelling express, and allowing ourselves but little rest, we succeeded in doing this, getting into Munich in time for breakfast on the Friday. We found the city full of visitors, for it is the last stage before starting for Ammergau. Spending a few hours in visiting the Palace Gardens, the churches, and other objects of interest, we retired to rest early, for we were tired, and our train left at seven o'clock the next morning.

At that hour, therefore, we were at the station, on Saturday, August 23rd, and after a little pushing, and being much pushed about, were enabled to secure tickets for Weilheim, and seats in the carriage. The distance from Munich to Weilheim cannot be very great, yet it was ten o'clock ere we reached the latter place. We found numberless vehicles of all descriptions awaiting the arrival of the train, and being anxious not to be left behind, we jumped into the one which happened to be nearest us. But horror of horrors! No sooner did the "vehicle" move than we discovered to our cost we had selected a hay-waggon innocent of springs! The situation was so novel, however, the surrounding country was so exquisitely beautiful, and our fellow-travellers were so pleasant, that the jolting, by affording continual

matter for merriment, was at last felt to be indispensable to the day's enjoyment!

The valley of Ober-Ammergau is about 6000 feet above the sea. It is a most charming spot; and whether we remember the route from Weilheim or the valley of Ammer itself, we feel constrained to say that we have seen no lovelier.

The road winds through a well-cultivated land, interspersed here and there by pine woods. A few hours after leaving Weilheim, the Bavarian Alps, in which the village of Ammergau nestles, are seen in the distance. As the mountains are approached the loveliness of the scene impresses one most strongly, and when the last wayside halting-place is reached, and the ascent commences, the beauty of the Bavarian Tyrol is understood. The road now winds itself along the face of a pine-clad cliff; on the right this towers high overhead, with here and there a water-course cut in its face, down which in the wet season the water dashes triumphantly. On the left the road overhangs a precipice, and we look through and over the tops of the trees to the other side of the narrow pass. As we approach the top the space between the hills gradually widens, and after passing an ancient monastery, we arrive at our destination. The repose which everything here seems to enjoy, and the feeling of which insensibly steals over the traveller, is a fit introduction to the Play which has made the village famous. But high as the hamlet lies, the mountains which surround it on every side, and which are mostly covered with forests, are still higher. In a few places, far up in craggy summits, in crevices protected alike from sun and wind, thin streaks of snow are still to be seen; while opposite the church and overhanging the village is a magnificent pine-clad rock at least one thousand feet high, rising abruptly from the plain. On its summit is a gigantic cross. The whole scene—village, mountains, and streams—formed a picture we shall never forget.

I must not omit to mention that about eight miles from Ammergau—soon after we had halted for the last time—the conveyance broke down! A few of our companions found seats in other vehicles, but for most of us (we were sixteen in all) nothing remained but to walk. This I by no means objected to, so we set out at a brisk pace, as we had been unable to secure lodgings beforehand, and we knew there would be a scramble for beds that night. It was seven in the evening before we reached the village, and after some little difficulty were fortunate enough to get a room, and also tickets for the Play. We soon learned that the Prince and Princess of Wales with a numerous suite were in the village on a similar errand as ourselves, and this doubtless was one cause of the extraordinary number of visitors.

Performed originally in obedience to a vow the villagers made, that if relieved from a terrible plague which at one time threatened to annihilate the whole population, they would occasionally represent among themselves the Passion of the Lord, whose mercy and forbearance they sought, the "Play" has lost none of its first simplicity. Practice and love of the work have rendered the performance perfect, and yet there is no mistaking the fact that the performers are simple country people. Herein doubtless lies the reason! Yet how, with their many other duties, they have been enabled so faithfully and artistically, and at the same time so naturally, to represent the latter scenes of that life so familiar to all readers of the Bible, must be a source of wonder to many.

The Play commenced at eight o'clock on Sunday morning; but previous to this, even so early as five o'clock, there was mass in the church. We attended the service an hour later, and found the church crammed in every part. Afterwards we strolled through the village, buying a few mementoes of our visit, such as photographs of the chief actors in the

Play, wood carvings, &c., and then made our way to the theatre—a large, substantially-built, though evidently temporary wooden structure.

The crowd was large, but good-tempered. Access to the first and second seats was only obtained by steps outside the building, as the seats sloped upwards and backwards from the stage. The seats at the back, which were the best, and the only ones under shelter, being ten or twelve feet from the ground.

The stage proper—that is, the part hidden by the drop—was of good size, permitting a large number of actors to be within it; while on each side of it, and open to the air, are what are supposed to be two streets of Jerusalem. The arrangements are exceedingly complete, no expense being spared to make the whole play a decided success.

The first scene is Christ's entry into Jerusalem "on a colt, the foal of an ass." Other scenes represent him driving the money-changers and sellers of doves from the Temple (a few live pigeons being let loose); his visit to the house at Bethany; the last supper; the agony in the garden; his appearance before Pilate and Caiaphas; the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Interspersed with these are about twenty *tableaux vivants:* the expulsion from Paradise; the murder of Abel; the trial of Abraham's faith; the fall of manna in the wilderness; the spies bearing the grapes; Jonah being cast out of the fish's mouth; and many others. In some of these scenes there must have been two hundred actors, little children being among them.

To illustrate the *tableaux vivants*, and also to explain the New Testament narrative as acted out, the services of a chorus, numbering nineteen voices, were called in. These singers ranged themselves in a semicircle in front of the stage, under the direction of a choir-master, who took the most of the recitative himself; a solo would sometimes be

sung by one, now by another, and then all would unite in a chorus. When the curtain was drawn up for the sake of exposing a *tableau*, the singers would fall back on either side, but when the acting proper was taking place they retired altogether.

There is no need here to criticise the performance. It has already been done in the public journals. Suffice it to say the acting was as near perfect as it well could be. The life of Christ is dear to us, partly on account of its thorough simplicity and naturalness. The son of a village carpenter, but feeling himself called to a greater work, Jesus Christ went about doing good, choosing his companions from fishermen and tax-collectors, mingling freely with Scribes and Publicans.

To delineate, *in propria persona*, such a character, no stage education is needed. The homely, simple life of a Bavarian Tyrolese, stimulated by a warm gratitude for mercies vouchsafed, and by an intense love of the work, has developed in these hardy mountaineers a complete aptitude for sustaining the characters so familiar to us. The costumes were most appropriate, and those of the chorus were gorgeous. The stage manager told us they were quite new.

As the performance is not intended as a money-making affair, the profits being devoted to the poor, there is no necessity for being niggardly in the arrangements, and the visitor consequently sees a play not only unequalled for its conveniences, but itself got up in a style far superior to any the play-going public are accustomed to.

For my own part, the circumstances attending the performance of the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play seem to preclude all art-criticism. While offering to the directors (the *cure* of the village superintends it all) my hearty congratulations on their success in presenting on a public stage the later scenes of a life so dear to Christendom, without

committing a single error in good taste, I nevertheless feel my commendation to be out of place; that the play is simply a religious act, to which, by courtesy only, the public are admitted.

How long the simplicity which now constitutes its charm will be retained I cannot tell. There are some who augur ill from the great influx of visitors, saying it cannot but turn the heads of such simple country folks; that town manners, with which they must, in course of time, become acquainted, must have a deteriorating effect, &c. On the other hand, we must remember that the Play takes place but once in a decade (the war interrupted its performance in 1870), so that with the exception of the marvellous beauty of this part of the Tyrol, there will be no special attraction for some years, and the country people will thus have time to settle down once more into quiet life; and the peaceful solitude of this Alpine valley will no doubt re-assume its soothing and quieting influences upon the performers of the Passion Play of 1871.

The Passion of Christ is represented in all its fearful details. The crown of thorns is put upon his head, and as if to intensify the horror, is handled by a *gloved* soldier, and pressed down with cross sticks! He is stripped, and scourged, and taken to execution; on the road Simon is met with, and is made to bear the cross.

At his crucifixion his executioners divide his raiment among them; he is offered a sponge dipped in vinegar; he imparts hope to the penitent thief; and after having given up the ghost, is about to have his legs broken by the soldiers, who have just done that office to the two malefactors. The Maria here interposes, and the soldier instead thrusts a spear into his side; from the wound there gushes out blood, causing a thrill of horror to pass through the vast assembly.

The descent from the cross is next accomplished, followed by the burial, resurrection, and ascension.

It was a faithful representation of the last scenes in Christ's life, illustrated by *tableaux vivants* taken from Old Testament and Apocryphal history.

I draw no moral from the Play. I went to see a play, or rather an act of devotion on the part of these Bavarian peasants, and should as soon think of examining critically every detail in connection with it, as to write a homily on the lessons to be drawn from it.

The Play has various effects on different minds. An orthodox minister of my acquaintance told me he sat it out, though several things seemed to him too horrible—almost blasphemous—to contemplate. For myself, I could not but wonder how men could put themselves so completely into the position of the Roman soldiers who scoffed at Christ in the Judgment Hall, and who afterwards crucified and pierced him. Even regarding Christ as merely a good man, we should of course condemn such conduct on the part of those who after all had no fault to find with him. But the actors regarded Christ as God; hence it showed the more real art in overcoming prejudices, and in so completely identifying one's self with such inhuman barbarians as those who represented Christ's persecutors did in this case.

It is easy to sit at home and write against such an exhibition; but few who have seen it, and who allow for the attending circumstances, would altogether condemn it. To me it was intensely interesting, and the memory of my visit to the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play of 1871 will be ever fresh and pleasant.



THE ÆSTHETICS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

It is scarcely legitimate to make even a guess as to the nature of the first act, or acts, of worship men offered to the gods, so entirely absent is any evidence concerning either that act, or acts, or the primal dawning upon man's intelligence of a possibility that beings superior to himself might exist beyond his ken. But whatever may have been the nature of that worship, it is certain that the "weirdness" of such a possibility must have imparted to it a degree of awe to which, in other moments, men would be utter strangers. But this possibility of the existence of God suggested itself to man in the childhood of the race; and the earliest records we have, the Vedic hymns, reveal man as regarding these gods of the sky, and of the earth, and of other natural phenomena, with a child-like trust as much as with awe. It would seem as though by nature man felt there were other Beings than himself, and that these Beings could not but be friendly to him.

In course of time, as mythology crystallized, and the order of priests found how advantageous it was for themselves to keep men in darkness respecting spiritual matters, systems of Religion (or Theologies) were formed, which are best described by the name of Fetishisms. As science—or the classification of natural phenomena, with its accompanying deductions—caused, by its progress and insistance, the various systems to modify their conceptions, this element of awe, though losing none of its real force, nevertheless lost

its blindness; and men are at length candidly admitting that while the great cause of things is completely beyond their grasp, yet the awe which mingles with, and tempers, their devotion, is an intelligible and reasonable factor among the many others which prompt such acts.

We may further conclude that this feeling of awe, which affected men when they endeavoured to realize more vividly the relations subsisting between themselves and the unseen, must have prompted them to enter upon their public devotions with an earnestness no ordinary occupation could either demand or expect. A care and thoughtfulness would inevitably colour those performances by which the favour of the gods was sought, or by which their anger was hoped to be appeased.

We may be sure, and all tradition favours the supposition, that what was offered to the gods was sacred; actions, and even words (as the name of Jehovah among the Israelites) were set apart specially for their use; and it is, I think, safe to affirm that all the fine arts were originally dedicated to the service and honour of the deities. So much indeed was this the case, that each art had its own deity, who was at the same time said to be its founder. There can be no doubt that architecture, painting, and music found their first home in the religious sentiments of man, and in the public worship of the early nations their first and natural outcome. The three, indeed, were at first united, and have only in comparatively recent times taken separate paths—so recent that it is by no means difficult to trace the various streams back to the broad river where they so long flowed undivided, and scarcely distinguishable from each other. The fine arts have not yet deserted their native soil—a soil in which they grow best, and in which, from its very nature, they ever will grow best.

But the general spiritualising of man's conceptions of the

Infinite has naturally led him to ignore the idea once so current, that the Almighty is pleased with such offerings, and that without them no favours should be asked, and certainly none expected. If bulls and goats were fit offerings to an angry God, let them be the first-born and without blemish; but when, later in the world's history, the near presence of God in the soul was the great aspiration of true hearts, the indispensable condition was that the desire be pure, and the spirit void of pride. Nevertheless, as no ancient custom can be *easily* broken through, the "externals of religion" still occupy a prominent place in the economy of public worship, though doubts frequently present themselves as to the validity of this position.

Pure religion—that is, love to God and love to man, Luke x. 27 and 28—is quite distinct from outward observance and ceremonial rites. These are but the æsthetics of religion when this takes the form of public worship.

It has been said that the cathedral arch naturally sprang up and enclosed the place of prayer; that men accustomed at first to meet in the open air when a large assembly was required, erected, so soon as their knowledge of architecture permitted them, a large covered building for the place of public worship; that of necessity such a building towered imposingly above the ordinary habitations of men, while no doubt its object ensured as much perfection as possible in the structure and style. This, however, I imagine would apply only to Gothic nations, for it cannot be disputed that among the early Pagan nations the gorgeous temples erected to their gods were in reality so many *offerings* to their titular deities; the Pantheon was supposed to be propitiated by the honours thus paid to it.

Among Christian nations, however, the case was different; converted from a belief in the gods many and lords many of surrounding Paganism, they were taught that God was not

to be worshipped by men's hands, and hence we find among the early Christian circles no tendency to express, either in stones, colours, or sounds, those convictions of eternal realities which we are compelled to think they possessed in a very marked degree. The religious orders, to whom the evangelisation of the world was committed, were in these early days, strict adherents to their founders' rules; denying all wealth themselves, and believing that religion consisted not in vain show and empty words, but rather in pure lives and in simple trust in God,—they were content with their own poverty and a simple place for public worship. With them, in their pristine days, *devotion* was everything, and the external surroundings but an accident.

Such a state of things could not last long; when circumstances required a large building in which to meet, it was *natural* for a noble building to arise, and the Gothic style, with its lofty arch pointing upwards to the skies, its massive style, and many opportunities for graceful ornament, could not fail to impress the builders with an awe which we, with our tutored minds, can only partially comprehend,—if indeed it did not also re-act upon their original intention, compelling them to see not only a favourable opportunity, but an imperious call of duty, to erect a temple worthy of the service therein intended to be rendered the Most High.

By slow degrees the relation between service and temple was reversed, and it was inevitable, the more authoritative the religion became, that it should be so. At a time when each man's hand was against his neighbour, but little chance existed of the flower of holiness and purity coming to perfection, and as men must trust in something, they were partly led, and partly driven (by their own fears) to trust in the externals of religion; the way to atone for a deed of wrong was to erect or endow a church. Such sentiments had of course their due effect upon the service, which became more and

more linked to the building, while a factitious sacredness was imparted to both.

This mis-placed reverence attained its highest in the Middle Ages, and as now there is in one section of the English Church a desire to return once more to medieval customs, it cannot be amiss to examine its pretensions.

The religious orders rapidly departed from their simple rule of faith and charity. Each in its turn became intoxicated with new-found power, and each in its turn declined, but not before first having done *its* share in materialising religion, and imparting a mysticism to the services of the sanctuary which finally resulted in a divorce of all that was spiritual and heartfelt. A "wholesome superstition" being thus generated among the laity, and the influence upon them of an elaborate ritual being noticed, the æsthetics of religion were soon employed as powerful engines to attract and retain the adhesion of the multitude.

To what an extent the thraldom of the Saxon race might not have reached had it not been for the Puritan stand three hundred years ago, it is not easy to say; but that to this reaction we owe what spiritual freedom we now possess, is unquestionable.

By maintaining this, I do not of course intend to ignore the faults of the *other extreme* into which this party ran, but it must be admitted that without such an extreme it is doubtful whether the mean would ever have been attained.

England at this time presents an interesting study from this point of view; from the Friend, who has scarcely a single formality (save that one of so regularly assembling together), to the Roman Catholic, with his almanac scarcely free from a saint's day, how many gradations there are in the matter of æsthetico-religious tendency!

The Free Churches of to-day are the descendants of the old Presbyterians, and the exceeding plainness of the build-

ings inherited by them, and the not less simple order of service, are silent witnesses to the fact that our religious ancestors relegated to a very minor position those externals of which other denominations think so highly. Of late years, however, a change has been creeping over the aspect of affairs, and places of worship are becoming more ornate and the services more elaborate.

That a church should be a well-built edifice no one will deny. David's lament that he was living in a house of cedar while the ark of God was still sheltering on a threshing floor, might well be ours, did we lodge sumptuously all the week, and on returning Sabbaths assemble in a wretched, cheerless room. Our love for anything may be measured by the amount of thought and care we bestow upon it. Yet there is a limit, or rather a "fitness," towards which our idea of church architecture should ever tend. No glaring colours should offend the eye; no grotesque ornament offend the taste; no incongruous associations should have the slightest chance of suggesting themselves; while on the other hand no unnecessary poverty in the details must be allowed to give rise to vain regrets. Everything should be in perfect harmony, and the general tone of the whole soft and subduing. It is perhaps right that, while our own homes give evidence of a general prosperity, the house where we periodically meet to worship Him who dwelleth *not* in temples made with hands, should participate in the increasing comfort, and be well ordered.

The elaboration of the services, and their gradual assimilation to a liturgical form, is, however, a movement greatly to be deplored. Liturgies are in practice, if not in theory, creeds which seriously impede the progress of religious thought; while it also must be regretted that grooves should be thus so easily provided for the aspirations of the soul to run in—aspirations, which to really benefit him who breathes

them must find their *own* road to their Divine object. The increasing desire to emulate cathedral choirs is only a feature of weakness when it finds a soil among the free churches. Music is not worship when it is simply listened to as a performance; and if it be urged that it is the sacred words to which the music is arranged that exercise a religious influence upon the mind, I reply it is seldom that the words of an anthem can be distinguished, for it is impossible among the intricacies of fugues and canons to tell what words are being sung.

That some there are who revel religiously—no! I cannot even admit that,—let me say who revel sentimentally (using this word in its *best* term) in music, either accompanied or unaccompanied with words, I gladly acknowledge, but they are few among the attendants at our services.

In short, what is worship? Is it, as Mr. Martineau says, "a *natural* and *spontaneous* utterance of a mind possessed by the conception of the infinite relations in which we stand, and aspiring towards a point of view worthy of their solemnity?" If so, with what reason do we bestow so much attention on the *form*, when after all it is the *subject*, which most nearly concerns us. Let us by all means obey the apostolic injunction and do everything decently and in order; but let not this wise precept be exceeded.

Fetishism was essentially a sensual religion, and every advance made upon it was an advance from sensualism to something higher; and though our senses are as Divine a gift (in reference to their origin) as are our intellectual and mental powers, and while their gratification is a legitimately pleasurable object to be sought after, we must remember that each faculty has its own proper sphere, and, as a rule, when one power is in play all the others occupy but subordinate positions under it. When realising to ourselves (or rather, endeavouring so to do), the relations subsisting be-

tween ourselves and the Unseen, our senses should and must be subordinated; but as it is by the senses alone that we know, and are known by, our fellows, they must to a certain extent be called into action when we assemble together for worship, though for the reasons alleged, we shall find our best interests promoted in *inverse* ratio to the prominency we give them.



WHAT DO WE KNOW OF GOD?

THIS may seem a strange question to ask in the year of grace 1875, and yet it is a question essentially necessary to ask. We might, indeed, put it in another and apparently a stranger form, and enquire, "Do we know *anything* of God; and, if so, what?" It is evident that the time is fast approaching, or is even now, when nothing will be taken for granted; when teachers of theology (may we not include teachers of practical religion also?) must bring their proofs with their doctrines. While the Positive philosophy, usually supposed to be the most advanced, asserts there are but few real Atheists, it seems unnecessary to enter into the discussion as to whether there is a God or not; suffice it to say that men everywhere have believed, and still do believe, in some Being or Beings superior to themselves.

The name by which these are called matters absolutely nothing; our Supreme Being we call God, but he is the same as the Hindoos call Brahma; the two races worship the same Being though under different names, and in spite of their respective beliefs that the two Deities are different. If there is but one GOD, He must of course be the one universally worshipped; those who think they possess the highest spiritual conception of Him may, however, say to those whose worship is less spiritual, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship, declare we unto you;" but surely more than this they may not say! Let missionaries of indiscrimation ponder it!

"The highest spiritual conception;" yes, it is here that the difference lies; not in the name under which the Deity is known, but in the conceptions men have of Him, the ideas they associate with Him. The more corrupt and base the national life of any race is, the more corrupt and base we find the character of its Deity.

India is a striking example of this. The original—the founder's—conceptions of the Supreme Being are exceedingly pure and spiritual, and those who hold them in their purity may indeed be said to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But the multitude, either unable to grasp this spirituality, or else not content with its simplicity, and "preyed" upon by the priests—those enemies to all progress human and divine—gradually sank into a base superstition, and the Supreme was represented as endowed with those evil qualities so rampant amongst themselves.

To a certain extent this may be said to be the case with Protestants and Christians, for we do sincerely trust that He whom many of our orthodox friends worship, has no existence, but is by them "worshipped in ignorance" of His real character!

It would seem (all this wrangling as to God's attributes and plans concerning us, considered) as though nothing was known of God. If anything was definitely known of Him there surely would be peace between us. Even the Bible, that book which is commonly supposed to be an inspired authority, fails to set matters at rest; the interpretation of this same giving rise to no little party animosity.

Were we to grant that something *was* definitely known of Him, to whom should we apply for this important knowledge? Each church would give a different view of His character. The more enlightened might perhaps refer us to the Bible, leaving us to form our own conclusions as to who and what the Supreme Being is. But this also would fail to satisfy us,

for in its pages we find no fixed and unchanging representation of Him.

Every age had its own conceptions of the Deity · these, as the ages grew, ripened into that spiritual idea of Him held by Jesus the son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, and by the New Testament writers generally.

We do not forget that the Old Testament writers here and there, by their bold denunciation of ceremonial observances (too often, alas, coupled with personal irreligion), and by their reiteration of the fact of God's spirituality (in opposition to the prevalent materialistic views of Him), prove themselves to have had very high conceptions of the Deity; but candid inquirers must admit that such pure conceptions were not only by no means general, but that they were not then *so confidently held* as after by him who spake as never man spake.

Perhaps this latter proposition should not be allowed to pass unsupported; but did not the success of Christ's teaching arise mainly from his own enthusiasm? Where do we read of the older Prophets gathering around themselves bands of followers, who had left all to follow them; and who in spite of their Master's cruel death, continued the struggle against superstition and priestcraft? The disciples of Jesus, distressed and even dismayed at his crucifixion and rejection, (as no doubt they were) did, nevertheless, take up his word and preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Then, as if to show that "culture and sweetness" had *their* worth, Paul, the great apostle as he is properly called, was brought to their aid. And, indeed, he was needed! When we remember the antecedents of those twelve—how some were fishermen, others taxgatherers, &c.; when we remember how sorely they tried the Master with their unbelief; when we remember, also, their attempts to force Jewish observances on the Gentile converts;—we cannot but feel thankful

that the intellectual yet enthusiastic Paul had accepted the teachings of the despised Galilean, and was able, not only to counteract the influence of these legalists, but also to bring them round to *his* view (44).

I have been speaking of "conceptions" of God; and it is these conceptions which constitute our whole knowledge of Him. My own conviction is that no authoritative (in the usual acceptation of this term) declaration concerning Him exists! A person who had studied in books only could not really and truly be said to *know* music, however well he could pass an examination in its theory. We must hear the sounds themselves, and make ourselves acquainted with rhythm and harmony. So is it with the theologian. He *knows* not God by abstract study, nor does he know Him by reading what others have said about Him, and then professing to believe it. *He* only knows God who, in the depths of his consciousness, knows and feels there is a God; he who brings himself into attune with what he believes to be the best and purest ideal will find he knows God.

God reveals Himself to those who seek him truly, and hence many a Church Doctor has missed him altogether. The experience of others is of course invaluable to us, but only in so far as we make that experience our own!

The Bible is of no use to us if we regard it as itself revealing God to us; it is of use only as giving us the experience of others, and as showing us the *way* to the Father. What men know of God, therefore, they cannot prove to others; indeed it is impossible to prove to another that there is a God. We may feel it ourselves, but the most we can do when trying to persuade men of the existence of a Being

(44) See R. W. Mackay's paper on *Mechanism* in the "Theological Review," 1871. I do not remember ever to have met with so forcible a statement of the issues involved in Paul's controversy with the other apostles.

superior to themselves is to appeal to their own consciousness.

Nor need we fear to openly avow the darkness which thus hides the Invisible. Truth must prevail eventually, and history tells us it has ever suffered most from those who were its professed friends.

Besides, it appears to me the most reasonable view to take of the matter. If by any possibility God could be made apparent to our senses, we might of course demand objective proof of His existence before consenting to it. But it is not so; "no man hath seen God at any time," and the only proof of his "being" must be subjective. It may be asked, why, if such be the case, do the (apparent) evidences of His existence and character accumulate? In other words, how it comes to pass that man has not those crude notions concerning the Deity that his ancestors had in past centuries; and how is it that the platform of one age should be, in such matters, but the stepping stone to a still higher platform in the succeeding age?

The answer is plain; the thought of a Being superior to ourselves is universal; there is no man but believes in the existence of a higher power than his own; therefore, what one generation learns for itself of the Deity it leaves as a heritage (a heritage, however, which cannot be *idly* succeeded to) to the next; each generation adding to, and purifying, the experience and ideas of the past. To appeal to a man for belief in a Deity is but to appeal to something in him which is common to all men; and man's natural instincts are the same now as ever they were.

Besides, knowledge of God may be said to be comparable with knowledge of other things; the uncertainties of one age become the certainties of the next; hence the appeal for assent to the statement that a God exists is made to that in us which has been growing and strengthening for centuries.

On the other hand (for this subject has many sides) we have no tangible product of these strugglings after God through long centuries. What each one of us must do, if we wish to prove to ourselves that there is a God, is to bring to the test what has been said and written concerning Him. What we ourselves cannot prove is not true to us, though it may be true to others; we have each to think out—to *make* as it were—God for ourselves!

From the nature of the case, therefore, we cannot *collectively* know anything of God. We can happily know something of Him, but it must be individually, though spiritual experiences may of course be compared, and found helpful in the universal search after the Infinite.

But while few deny the existence of a God, there are more who doubt his personality; yet even these are few compared to the overwhelming majority who do believe that God is something more than a mere abstraction; call it force or what we will.

It may be from education and early training; it may be, let us hope it *is*, by deep spiritual experiences; but it is a fact, for which in our opinion we cannot be too thankful, that most of us believe in a God, the Creator and Father of all. It is a matter of thankfulness because man's nature seems to require a belief in some one greater than himself. An ambition, an inspiration for something higher and nobler than himself, is a most encouraging and hopeful element in a man's character; it ennobles and purifies him; and because natural, it is, we venture to say, legitimate in its hopes.

It does not however follow that if, as a correlative to men's best desires, an object worthy of these desires exists, that the object should be within our reach and present comprehension. It may possibly be, and probably is, the fact, that man can best be drawn upwards by an *invisible* agency; that being both body and spirit (the former perishing as we know)

spiritual influences alone can exercise that power over him which the best of men have acknowledged feeling.

Man is ever reaching forth to the things of infinity; endeavouring to comprehend the laws of the vast universe, and trying to solve questions which *will* arise concerning his own being and destiny; and this, while apparently proving the existence of an infinite Being; the cause of all, also helps to explain why this Being should be so hidden from our eyes, so veiled from our material, mathematical curiosity. *Now* are we drawn up and out of ourselves; *then* should we be studying dry propositions. *Now* are we earnest seekers after truth; *then*—all spiritual wants being supplied,—should we be contented dwellers in the clay.

Yet this Being whom we call God, and whom we argue from all around us must be *One*, Supreme, Creator, has not left man without a witness to Himself. The very yearnings after "more light" seems incontestably to prove there *is* more light beyond, and also, if more light, the source of that light itself.

It has been said there are nations still existing in whose language there is no word for God to be found. I cannot really think such to be the case. Surely, no race of men exists but what believes in one or more superior beings to themselves;—are there any peoples who have no belief in an after life? The very Indians, a people who have been left to themselves for ages, have some faith in a spirit world, and in a Great Spirit who rules there.

Is there not a light that lighteth every man who is born into the world? does not a consciousness that there is some one greater than ourselves come to each one of us at some period of our lives?

But we cannot rest here; to feel there is a God and not to strive after greater knowledge of him is impossible. Men

have ever thought of a Deity, and their own condition has to a large extent decided as to the nature of that Deity.

It is not given to every nation to furnish to the world a model of discipline and order as the Romans did; nor is it given to every nation to be what the ancient Greeks were, models of refinement and of art cultivation; neither has it been the lot of every nation to furnish to the world such rich stores of spiritual literature as the Jews have done.

An Eastern Sheikh, impressed with the folly of his tribe in worshipping dumb idols and the hosts of heaven, left his country and his kindred, feeling "called" to go elsewhere and worship Him whom it was evident was above all and in all, and who, besides, was unseen.

The Sheikh's family increased, and a few years saw a large tribe, and then a nation, whose leaders, at any rate, had inherited the grand faith of its founder; and who believed themselves to be special favourites of the great Jehovah. This belief influenced all their actions, and we find their literature teeming with allusions to Him, and His protection of them. Under these circumstances it was imperative that Jehovah should be in some way described to the multitude, and new thoughts concerning Him would be continually occurring. Nevertheless it was inevitable that among the uneducated commonalty the purer conceptions of the Deity should quickly lose their spirituality, and degraded notions concerning him take their place; especially does it seem so to us when we remember how rapidly the power and influence of the priests grew; a class of men whose *interest* it was to keep others from a true knowledge of the Deity.

In opposition however to these, arose a line of faithful men—faithful to their consciousness—who continually protested against the gross superstition of their countrymen, and who averred from their own experience that Jehovah delighted not in burnt offerings and sacrifices, not even

should these reach to thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, and should the very fruits of one's loins be given for the sin of one's soul. No! those who desired to propitiate Him must do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him. This same experience taught them also, what they would never have learnt from the priests, that the Deity, who was at the same time the Creator, was a Father to His children. Indeed, it was impossible to invest Jehovah with the characteristics peculiar to men without investing him also with their moral qualities,—generosity, benevolence, fatherly feeling, &c.,—though, from reasons already stated, none but the mentally and spiritually free would carry speculation so far.

This prophetic conception of God grew in intensity until Jesus Christ, the great prophet and staunch opposer of the priests, gave the world such conceptions of the universal Father as have perhaps never been excelled.

As these later centuries have inherited the traditions of ancient Rome and Greece, so have they also come into the glorious heritage bequeathed by the Jewish nation; the Psalms of David express *our* wants and thanksgivings as they did those of the second Jewish king. We cannot exceed in beauty and pathos the sublime utterances of the prophets of the captivity; while no prayers ever yet composed have equalled for conciseness and grand simplicity the one taught by the carpenter's son of Nazareth to his disciples, commencing. "Our Father who art in heaven."

It is only reasonable to suppose that the result of the experiences and intuitions of hundreds of generations cannot be altogether wrong; the more so when we notice how each century broadens the idea, and makes the Father of a family the Father of the universe. As we ourselves grow in purity of thought and in spirituality of conception, so does our ideal of God open out likewise.

But do we find in our own experience that the Great One who is evidently the first cause, is a personal Father and Friend? We answer, yes! it is possible to verify to ourselves the hopes and beliefs of past generations; we can by the exercise of those peculiar, subtle, and undefinable spiritual powers, discern Him who alone can be the Father of our spirits. He may not, of course, be in Himself personal, as we understand the term (such a phrase may be only applicable to our present condition), but He may be personal to *us*, and that without doing violence to any teaching of science or logic. When we do right; when we deny ourselves for the good of others; when, at some personal cost, perhaps, we benefit some fellow-creature, we are at ease with ourselves; our consciences approve us; we feel that we are working for Him, who we are told "worketh hitherto;" that in short we are one with the first cause and prime mover of all things. What meaning may we not find in John's encouraging statement to his beloved disciples: "If our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence towards God."

It may be I shall be told these are but the imaginings of a fertile brain; and I readily admit the extreme difficulty of the subject; but for my own part I am convinced there is something in our nature which cannot be reconciled with the fact of there being no God; and if, therefore, we believe in His existence we are constrained to consider Him personal as regards ourselves.

But it must be remembered that *only* on reciprocal grounds can we find the Father; we have to "seek Him if *haply* we may find Him;" God does not come to us without our *first* seeking Him. Opposed as is this view to popular, especially orthodox, notions, I nevertheless maintain its truth: (inasmuch though as our *natural* yearnings after God may be regarded as God first seeking us, the popular notion is correct but *only* in this sense). It is impossible for a man to sit idly

down, as it were, and await a "visitation" from the Most High; he must strive after Him with deep soul-longings. To feel the Creator, the Great God, to be our Father, we *must* ourselves be as His children. And is this all we know of God? Can we learn nothing of His power and love; His tenderness and compassion; His mercy and strengthening influences? To all which I reply, God *may be* our FATHER, *if we choose to make him so.*



OUR CHILDREN'S PRAYERS.

To us it is but of little importance what the result will be of the recent dispute concerning the practical utility of special Prayer. Indeed, so far as any *definite* result is to be anticipated, it is useless to hope; but were such a result—were a verdict, yea or nay—to be obtained, it would, as we have said, be of little importance to *us*. We do not believe the rinderpest or cholera are to be averted on account of any prayers that may be offered to the Almighty. His indeed are the cattle upon a thousand hills, but to man as His vicegerent is their welfare relegated; we are His offspring, but it avails us nothing to enquire concerning our neighbour, "Am *I* my brother's keeper?" There are certain laws of health, certain standards of cleanliness, which we full well know cannot be disregarded or only partially attended to, without seriously affecting for the worse the condition of man and beast.

Where such laws are disobeyed—where little or no provision is made for supplies of pure food and fresh air, rinderpest and cholera follow as natural consequences, and it is useless, nay, rather is it not blasphemous to beseech Him of whom nature is but the cloak—the Revealer,—to make null his own laws; in other words to contradict himself?

Nor is it less opposed to all our notions of the divine government to pray for speedy recovery from dangerous illness; or to seek Heaven's aid in baffling the angel of death. Natural (or God's) laws will, and must have their full play, and only by strict attention to such laws can we obtain any

benefit possible from them. A profligate man is no more safe from accidents by travel than a philanthropist, provided both take the same precautions against such. If the philanthropist fail to take the necessary measures, Providence will not interpose to spare him because he is a philanthropist; neither will the profligate one be cut off *in spite* of his wise precautions. The Almighty does not so stultify himself as thus to arbitrarily interfere with those wise and beneficent laws, which, regarded as a whole, are called "Nature."

Thinking in this manner of the Spirit who rules the Universe—remembering how little, how very little, we know of God—it will not be amiss to consider how we should teach our children to think of Him. Our own past experiences—we remember how *we* were taught to regard God, and Christ, and the devil, &c.—prompt us to say as little as possible to our children, lest one day they may regret our having taught them so much which they would willingly forget, but which a superstitious fear continually recalls. Our own faith and hope forbid us to treat with other than a smile the argument which dogmatic churches would here confront us with, "Be careful they do not blame you for teaching them so little," because we cannot so conceive of an all-wise and holy God eternally punishing his creatures for what they could not help; besides, we have no idea of a man calling that his own for which he has not worked.

If we deem it best to teach our children as little as possible about the Deity—leaving them to work out the problem even as we have worked it out for ourselves (or rather, are now working at it)—what shall that little be, and at what age shall we commence?

As the former depends largely upon the answer we give to the latter, let us consider this first. And at the outset we have to confess our inability to lay down any rule, for

children differ so much that what would be food to a child of six, might be poison to another child of twelve.

My own eldest child, (a boy of five) is fond of being talked to when he is in bed, and his mother having once or twice said the Lord's prayer to him, he often asks to hear "our daily bread." On more than one occasion, when restless and unable to sleep, he has called his mother up for the purpose of saying it to him, and then has immediately added, almost before the last words were out of her mouth, "and now say, 'Sing a song of sixpence!'" The child has heard of persons dying, (as what child has not?) and of course has asked why people died, and where heaven is. He has frequently asked if there are 'busses and carriages in heaven, and whether he will be able to play there; to all such questions, I need scarcely say, I always give an answer in the affirmative, for how can I say otherwise, *not knowing the contrary?*

A parent will find it quite enough to teach a child two things—obedience and kindness. These well taught will prepare a foundation upon which the noblest of characters may afterwards be reared. Obedience, a cheerful, ready obedience, not begotten by fear, but prompted by trust and love; kindness to those around him, not caring to pain them even by word or look; and to the dumb animals, disliking to crush a worm, or to injure a fly; and to the flowers (for they also have life and beauty), never heedlessly destroying a single bud or leaf. Here is work enough for any parent, without having to tell the child of things too deep for him. It is difficult for us grown up men and women to conceive of God, to concentrate our thoughts upon Him, without at the same time picturing Him to our minds as a man of like passions to ourselves; but for the sake of generations yet unborn, who we hope will live in a brighter light than we enjoy, and grasp spiritual realities which to us are

but as shadows in the night, let us avoid all teaching which shall produce that tendency in our children.

And what after all can we teach them? The more we probe our hearts, the more we try over our thoughts of Him, the less do we feel inclined to say, "God is good; He made all things—you and me. He is all-powerful; He sends the rain and the sunshine," &c. For all this may be true to ourselves, but it is not, cannot be true to our children. "If God is good," say they, "if God is all-powerful, and can do anything, why does He let wicked people live? Why does He send the rain when I want to go out? And why does He not let us live in a fine house with a nice garden?" And so on, as we know children *do* talk. Unless a child gets a *satisfactory answer to his questions* an injury is done him; a slight injury perhaps, but still an injury, and many such will constitute a serious one. Yet what satisfactory answer can be given to such questions as these? (45)

It is the custom to teach our children the Lord's prayer as soon as they can lisp, and much "sentiment" is talked of their saying this at their mother's knee; but what, I ask, in the name of all that is sacred in childhood, is the use of putting phrases into a child's mouth which you yourself cannot explain, and which he, if he takes it in at all, takes in *literally?*

Surely materialism has enough to answer for besides the charge of having so completely materialised *from infancy* all our notions of the other world as to make it a life-long task to attain unto its spirituality.

"Our Father, who art in heaven." What a glorious thing to be able to say from the very bottom of our hearts! feeling that the Creator is our father, and that we have a something in us—a spirit, that answers to His nature.

(45) If God gives us daily bread, why does Pa go to business? is a very natural query.

"Our Father, who art in heaven." What an unmeaning phrase on the lips of a little child. He cannot quite understand why he should have two fathers and only one mother (of the two, perhaps, he needs the latter most), that he should be able to *see* only one of them, and that the other is in heaven, a place far above the moon and stars; whereas, in a few years' time he will be taught that heaven is not a place, but rather a condition. Let us remember that Jesus Christ gave this prayer to *men* who *asked* Him how they should pray.

When, then, we talk of imparting Religion to a child, let us not confound it with Theology; for Religion has simply to do with our outward conduct, which is of course prompted by inward motives.

When we talk of a religious man, we immediately picture to ourselves one who loves his fellow-men, and who labours for their good. Not a thought however suggests itself as to his "soundness" or orthodoxy; his religion is that *outward* conduct which has gained for him the reputation of being a "religious man." It is true that one almost necessarily considers such an one to be God-fearing; to be in constant communion with his God; to enjoy spiritual fellowship with the Unseen; but we never ask ourselves as to what his *particular* beliefs are; suffice it that he visits the fatherless and the widow, and keeps himself from the prevalent modes of sinfulness.

With the Theologian however it is different; the very name conjures up endless controversies; bitter quarrels, cruel persecutions; in short it excludes—strange to say!—all ideas of Religion. Among the multitude, Religion has to bear the odium and hatred which has so characterized Theology that the term "*odium Theologicum*" has passed into a proverb! (How are the mighty fallen, indeed!)

Of course the confusion has arisen from each new school

of Theology appropriating to itself all Christianity, and proclaiming "salvation" (whatever that may mean) in *its* dogmas alone, to the exclusion of all others. The motive power, the incentive to "Religion," the cause, has come to be known by the name of its would-be-result! Alas that Religion, our duty, pleasure, and delight, should be so degraded as to become the caller-to-mind of everything that is mean, base, and wicked—of that which is its own natural enemy!

Regarded in this light, it will of course be conceded that Religious and not Theological education must be imparted to our children; and yet perhaps not entirely conceded either, for *our* definition of Religion, it will be noticed, omits mention of the final cause—of God!

Yet Religion must eventually be so regarded; the farther we leave our mental infancy behind, and endeavour to penetrate the thick darkness which environs the eternal;—the deeper we try to gauge that fathomless unknown which surrounds us on every side;—the farther off from our conceivableness, or even thinkableness, must He appear, whom, whether as Mind, or Spirit, or Force, we regard as the absolute—as the unknown cause of things!

And yet with all this pushing back into remote and still remoter darkness that Being whom we call God, it cannot for a moment be granted that our Religion also dwindles into a philosophical abstract. Though by no means so familiar with the Deity as the Theologian is, the Philosopher nevertheless feels himself at one with the Spirit of the Universe; and while professing *his* ignorance as to the modes of dealing God adopts with His children, and with which the sects are so cognisant (though withal so much at variance about!), he yet would not exchange for their self-gratifying assumptions that inward peace to which he has attained, partly by means of that very profession (of ignorance), and partly by his more perfect understanding of the order of things.

If then such men exist, and there are many such, who, while hesitating to *affirm* anything of God, are yet religious in their lives and conduct, it goes far to prove how foolish and sentimental is much of the talk one hears about a "religious" education. In an interesting essay on "Herder, as a Theologian," in the October number of the *Theological Review*, (1872), the following is given as his definition of Religion :—

"Religion is the acknowledgement in feeling, thought, and conduct, of the laws of our existence. It is the profound conviction of what we are as parts of the world, and what we ought to be and to do as men. This conviction is instinctive, a voice of conscience, our nature itself testifying what man is and should be. The religious man, therefore, is the conscientious man, with reverence and joy recognizing the will of God concerning himself in his own structure, and endeavouring with great painstaking to obey it by the development and perfecting of this nature. Thus the end of his Religion is *humanity*, or the attainment of his true manhood."

Tupper talks sentiment when he tells parents to "teach the feeble knees their bending;" it is the will, the conscience of a child that needs training; it is his duty to those about him that should be his first care, and if the *strong* knees and willing heart be laid low before the shrine of the Invisible—but yet of Him who is *inwardly* felt and recognized—in after years, it is all that can possibly be required of us.

If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how *can* he love God whom he hath not seen? We do not argue from the greater, but from the less *to* the greater. Our *immediate* duties are our *most* important ones, and Religion consists not in "correct" views of God and of our relations to Him (for these can never be attained in this life, and the attempt to attain them, which by the bye is lawful enough, is

work for after and maturer years), but in doing that which we know we ought to do in our daily conduct and treatment of our fellow-men.

To quote from Mr. Smith's essay once more :—

"I am not bound as a Christian to accept as true all that there may be reason to believe that Jesus himself taught."

Therefore I allow myself the greatest freedom in dealing with those principles he inculcated. If I find it stated that Jesus affirmed the first great commandment to be "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind and strength and heart," and the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," I hesitate not to *reverse* their order, and say we must first love our brother whom we have seen, and *then* learn to love God whom we have not seen!

Nor do I make the first statement false by this treatment. Taking into account the circumstances which called forth this dictum; remembering the Theological standpoint of those Jews to whom it was addressed, we think the statement was wise and good. Now, however, the aspect of things is changed; all liberal thinkers prize most those conceptions of God which they have themselves thought out, and would willingly drop out of remembrance (for their baneful effects more than counter-balance their educational value) those material ideas of the Deity imparted to them in their childhood.

And who will deny that the present liberal conception of God may be *as* materialistic to a future generation as *our* early conceptions were as compared with our present knowledge?

But what it may be asked, shall we do when our children ask the meaning of our devotions, of our church-going, of such words as God, Jesus, eternity, &c.? The answers we should give must be left to each of us, individually; so much depends upon the age of the child, upon his men-

tal capacity, and upon his parents' ability to explain, that no definite reply can be given.

There are things which childhood *must* leave to a future day, and there are many actions of his parents which cannot be explained; a child must take many things on trust; it is his "religion" to do so quietly. It may not however be amiss to say we go to church to worship God *with others*, and then to anticipate further questions by telling them they will some day understand it, and go too; but would it not be better to say *we* also have our work and duty to do, and to know that work and duty so as to do them well, we find it helpful to hear what others have to tell us about them; that *we* have lessons to learn, &c.?

But whatever we do let us be careful what we say to our children; above all things, while teaching them the religiousness of saying what they mean, and meaning what they say, let us impress upon them, when they *do* learn to pray, the exceeding reality of what seems to be no reality; and also the utter futility of their expecting answers to prayer, in those cases where everything depends upon their own exertions and will. Why should we who have attained unto deeper meanings of the Universe, and at the same time, freed ourselves from superstitious fears and sentimental ideas, teach our children those things which we ourselves have outgrown, and which will only result in hindering them from entering into the higher spiritual life so early as they otherwise might do?

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